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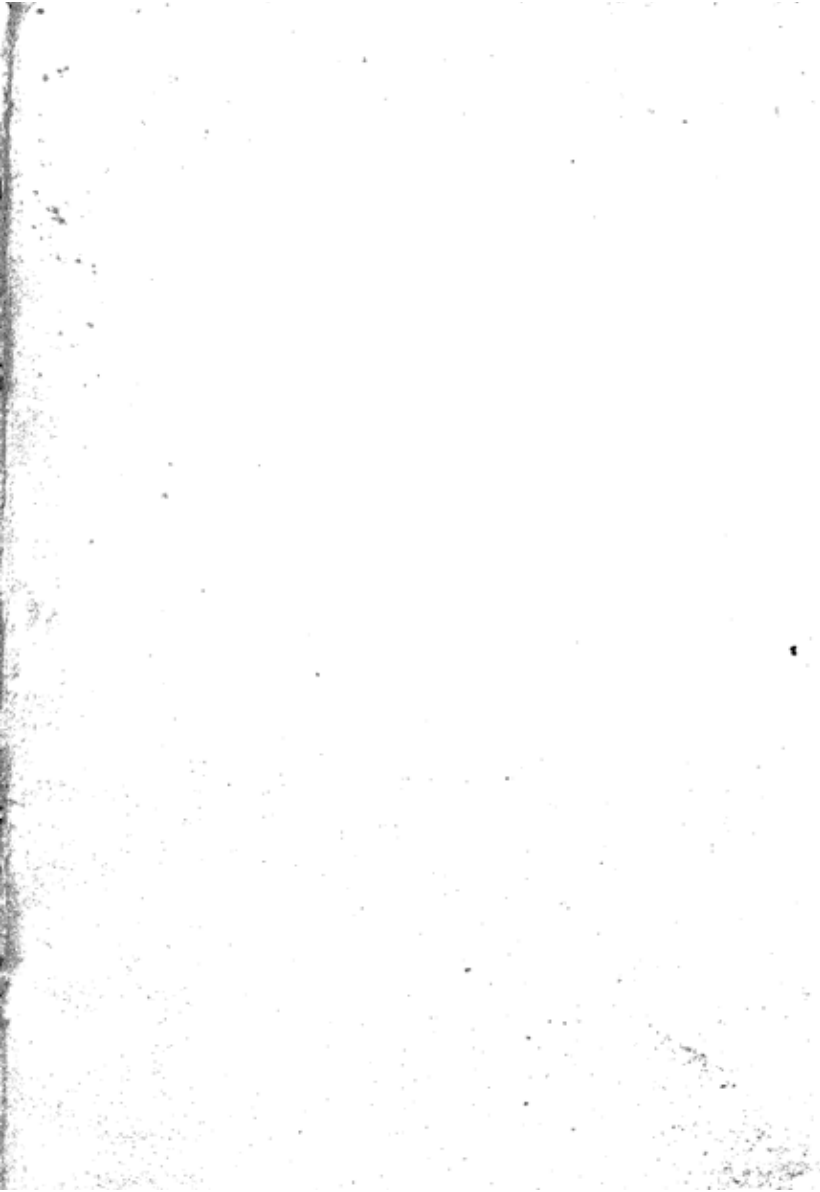
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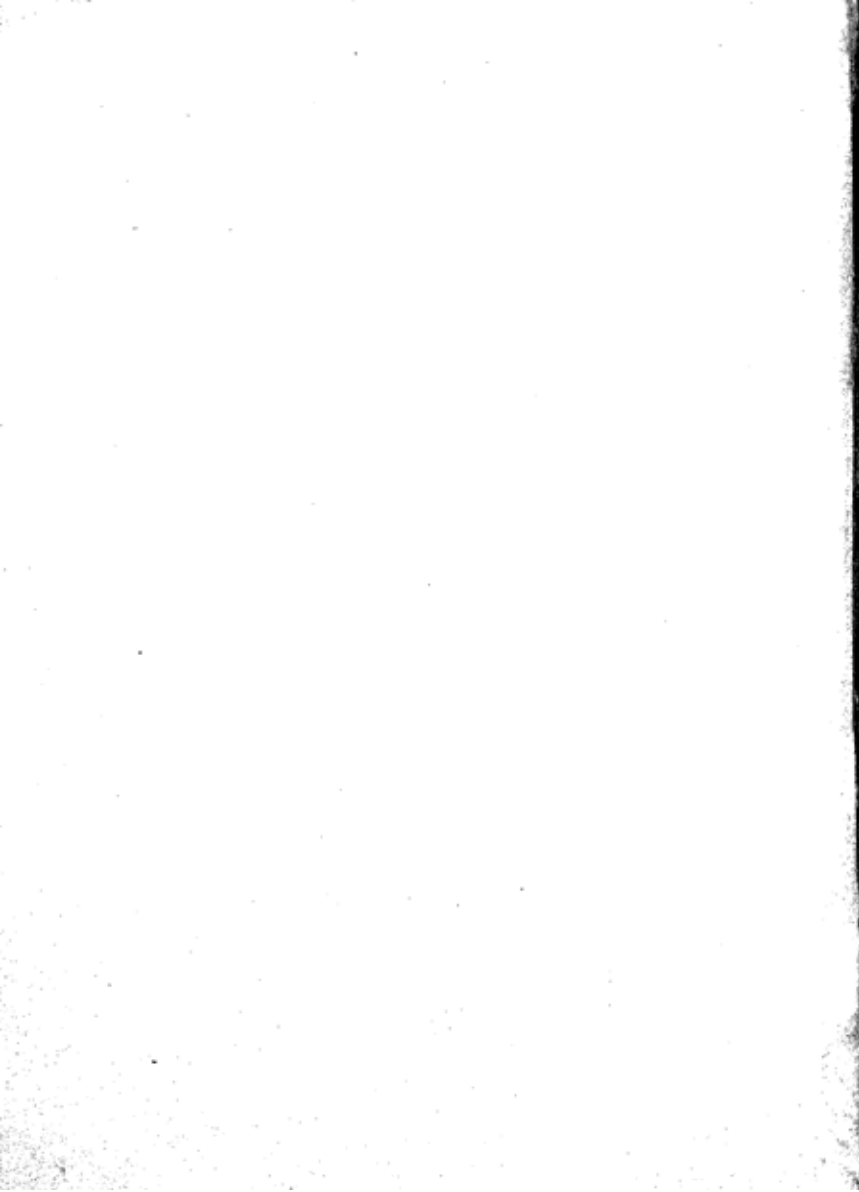
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THE WISDOM OF THE EAST SERIES

EDITED BY

L. CRANMER-BYNG, F.R.S.A.

ALAN W. WATTS

SELECTIONS FROM THE  
THREE HUNDRED POEMS  
OF THE T'ANG DYNASTY





Selections from the ~~126~~  
Three Hundred Poems  
of the T'ang Dynasty

Translated by Soame Jenyns,  
Assistant Keeper, Department of Oriental  
Antiquities, the British Museum

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John Murray, Albemarle Street,  
London, W.

*First Edition . . . 1940*

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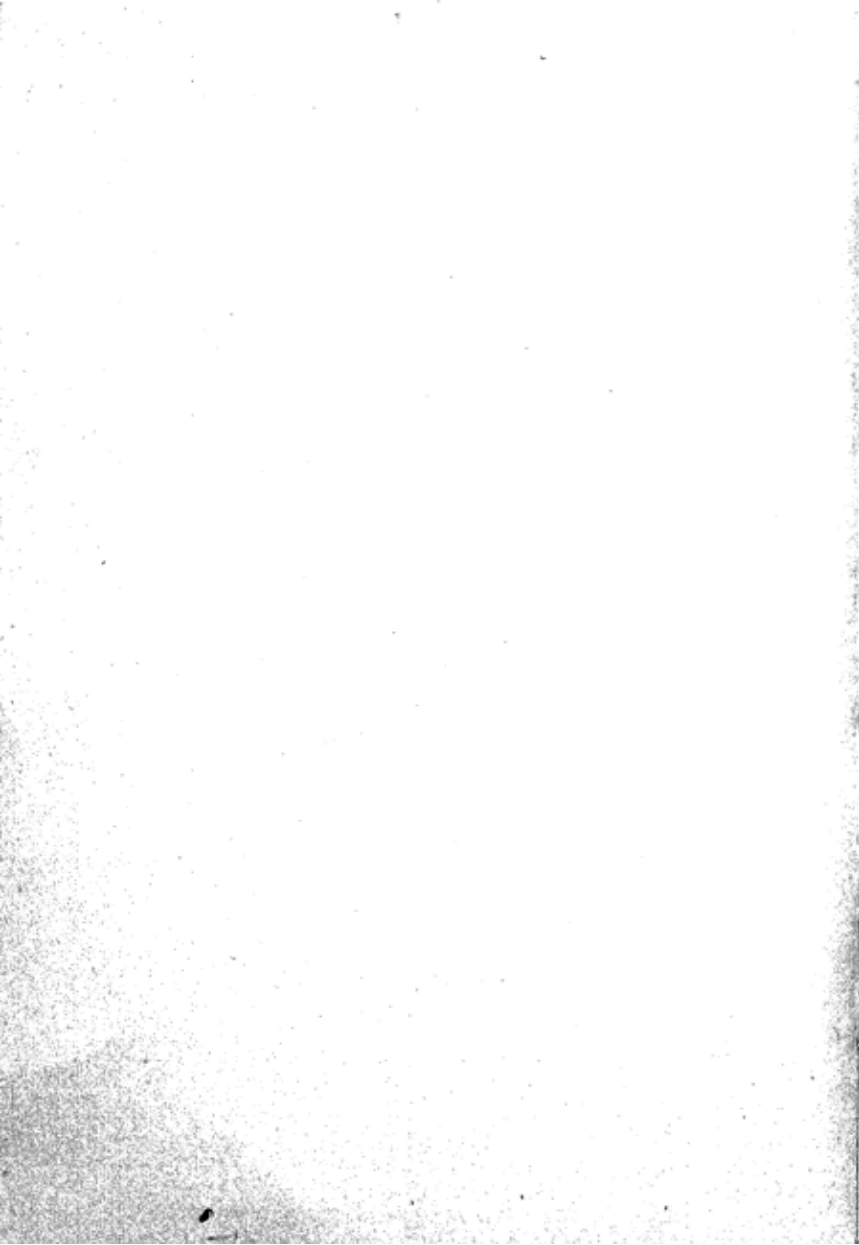
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## EDITORIAL NOTE

*THE object of the editors of this series is a very definite one. They desire above all things that in their humble way, these books shall be the ambassadors of good-will and understanding between East and West, the old world of Thought, and the new of Action. They are confident that a deeper knowledge of the great ideals and lofty philosophy of Oriental thought may help to a revival of that true spirit of Charity which neither despises nor fears the nations of another creed and colour.*

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## FOREWORD

THE T'ang dynasty has been dubbed the golden age of Chinese poetry. Probably the collection entitled "The Three Hundred Poems of the T'ang Dynasty" is more widely read and better known in China than any other. Professor Giles has told us that the scholarship of the period was neither very original nor very profound. This is also true of its poetry, which abounds in elegant imitations of the earlier folk-songs yet lacks their robustness and spontaneity: its natural parents were the chorus and the chant we find in the *Book of Odes* and the *Elegies of Ch'u*, but beside these T'ang poems are at their worst mere excursions into archæology. Yet when criticism has had its say it must be admitted even the less good T'ang poetry possesses a consumptive beauty; at its best it has all the glorious quality of autumn foliage: in the hands of Wang Wei, Tu Fu and Po Chü-i it deserves all the praise that has been lavished upon it.

The output of the T'ang genius was overwhelming. The names of poets that have survived amount to at least three thousand, although most of these cannot have been worth any consideration. A collection of their poems published in 1707 amounted to 48,900 poems arranged in nine hundred books. These poets came from the scholar class; as many of them were officials whose administrative duties involved travels over immense distances with inadequate communications,



their poems are full of prolonged separations, the dangers of war, and of banishment from Court to a distant post. It is the poetry of a small cultivated society protesting against the failure of the State to recognize its qualities, lamenting the insecurity of the days in which it lived. It is not politically conscious. It carries no message. It breathes the sadness of a full-blown civilization haunted by the impermanence of its own existence. It is the poetry of middle age, not youth; of autumn, not of the spring. Yet the very autumnal qualities of the T'ang poets are topical to-day.

The collection under review composed of two hundred and ninety-eight poems<sup>1</sup> was made by an anonymous scholar, who signed himself "A retired scholar of the lotus pool," for his family circle and was published in the first year of the reign of Ch'ien Lung (1736), probably by friends and after his death. We do not know in what manner the selection was made. Some editions omit verses and even whole poems that the others contain. Variations in the text itself are very slight.

It has been the fashion among some Chinese to divide the poems into the four periods, of spring (620-700), summer (700-780), autumn (780-850) and winter (850-900) according to the time at which they were written,<sup>2</sup> but it is not very easy to draw these artificial boundaries between them and more convenient to follow another school which simply divides the poems into those which were written before and after the rebellion of An Lu-shan in 756, which in effect destroyed the

<sup>1</sup> Three hundred and twelve if different parts of the poems are counted separately. Bynner gives the number as 311.

<sup>2</sup> See a series of excellent articles in the *T'ien Hsia*—"The four seasons of T'ang poetry," by Dr. T. C. H. Wu.

capital and drove the dynasty into decline. The catastrophe colours all poems that were written after that date.

The poems range from the simplicity of Po Chü-i,<sup>1</sup> of whom it was said that he read his poems to his washerwoman to make certain that anyone could understand them, to the virtuosity of Li Shan-yin, who was the author of many witty maxims and always anxious to display his scholarship by obscure classical allusions. They contain poems by the great nature poet Wang Wei, who was both a famous painter and a Buddhist mystic; of whom it was said his pictures were poems that had taken form and his poems disembodied paintings. The poems are lyrical; some were written for music. They were composed in lines of seven and four monosyllables with a caesural pause after the fourth or second monosyllable respectively, but there are irregularities. Antithesis and parallelism are marked mannerisms. One line states a proposition and the next develops it. The Chinese delighted to make play with contrasts: hard is balanced against soft, youth against age, heat against cold, winter against spring: and this habit lent their verse an added but artificial beauty.

Although T'ang poetry is full of traditional image and allusion, these conventions are used on the whole with taste and discernment. It was not until the Sung dynasty that the effort to acquire a classical style suffocated originality beneath

<sup>1</sup> I think Po Chü-i is my favourite. His poems possess a universal flavour; as Waley so charmingly puts it, his verses were on the mouths of kings, princes, concubines, ladies and ploughboys and grooms. They were inscribed on the walls of schools, temples and the cabins of ships. "A certain Captain Kao Hsia-yü was courting a dancing girl. You must not think I am an ordinary dancing girl, she said to him, I can recite Master Po's Everlasting Wrong, and she put up her price."

a false literary varnish. The subject-matter may become monotonous, the images hackneyed, but there is a simple directness that holds the attention. The howling of monkeys in the gorges is used repeatedly to express desolation: the geese travelling overhead in their emigrations from north to south and back again to suggest messengers. Place names occur again and again like the haunting references to the Yü Mên Kuan (the jade gate pass) which lies on the N.W. Frontier of Kansu. This is the gate in the lands of the passage, which the Chinese ever since their occupation two thousand years ago have struggled to hold, because its possession was indispensable against the Wu Sun, Yüeh Chih, Hsiung Nu, Uigur, Tibetan, Tangut and Mongol invaders, and among whose wastes thousands of Chinese soldiers have died.

The topography of T'ang China is a difficult subject.<sup>1</sup> It is not always easy to identify the geographical position of the towns, ruins, lakes and mountains mentioned in these poems or to discover their modern equivalents. The T'ang capital that is continuously mentioned was Ch'ang An now Hsi-an-fu in Shensi. The T'ang empire was divided into provinces, but the poems continue to use the archaic geography of an earlier period. The chief provinces mentioned and their approximate equivalents to-day are Chin (Shansi), Ch'in (Shensi), Ch'u (Hunan), Shu (Szechwan), Wei (Honan), Wu (Kiangsu), Yen (Hupeh), Yüeh (Chekiang). The boundaries of these states were always changing as they rose or declined in power, as an almost continual border warfare existed between them, but long before the T'ang dynasty they had actually ceased to exist.

<sup>1</sup> See *Atlas of China* by A. Herrman, p. 40. The T'ang Dynasty, A.D. 618-906; boundaries of, A.D. 700.

The subject-matter of the poems are the elementary themes of a civilization at any time : friendship and partings, war, mythology, the impermanence of existence. There is little satire, or when it exists it is carefully concealed. Love poems are rare and generally anonymous. Confucian commentaries are ready to explain them away as political sentiments in disguise ; when they appear they are invariably delivered through the mouth of a woman. Like the Greeks, the Chinese turned to country life for their inspiration. The lives of the cowherd, the wood-cutter, the fisherman attracted them. But their poets were often exiles whose life in the country was not of their own seeking, and underneath their rural sentiments can be detected a longing for the capital. Like the Greeks, they would sing stanzas to the flute, and like them, they often turned to the ladies of pleasure as their muses. Emotional friendships between men were not uncommon. Men were married at a very early age to wives chosen for them by their parents. Chinese society did not encourage romantic affection or permit respectable women any social life outside the women's quarters. The birth and care of children, the rearing of silkworms, weaving, dyeing, embroidery, the preparation of food and wine occupied their lives. Both Confucianism and Buddhism impressed upon them their inferiority, and although cultivated and well educated women did exist outside the ranks of the courtesans, they were exceptions. On the other hand, a knowledge of art, letters and music was becoming to a singing girl : nearly all the ladies of letters were courtesans. It was to this class that the artist turned for the companionship which their wives were forbidden by social conventions to supply. In Ch'ang An the brothels were the haunts of the scholars and poets.

Chinese poetry is full of descriptions of picnics, and boating parties in their neighbourhood and of the dances, songs and dramatic talents of the women they met there. The emancipation of women in China has but recently brought this kind of society to a close.

The character of the period is most widely known by the pottery figures and figurines, which have been excavated from graves. Figures of camels and horses, dancers and musicians, acrobats and polo players, grooms and serving-maids, all are modelled with great vitality, charm and grace. In this pottery the many foreign types betray a lively curiosity of the West, just as T'ang textiles are full of Persian and Sassanian designs adapted to Chinese style, and their Buddhist sculptures are directly influenced by India.

There was probably no period up to the present day when China was so sensitive to foreign influences. The conquests of Mohammed (born at Mecca A.D. 570) had driven out of Central Asia thousands of refugees who would not pay tribute or accept the Koran. China became an asylum for the refugees from India and the infidels of Persia and Arabia. Yzdegend, son to the last Sassanian Persian king, sought protection of the Emperor T'ai Tsung and was given a palace at Ch'ang An. The early Caliphs were anxious to cultivate happy relations, although the twelfth Caliph, a contemporary of Jui Tsung (710-712), is supposed to have promised the dragon-throne to the first of his generals who could take it, but their armies did not get farther than Yarkhand; yet Medina sent presents of horses and glass, and a fleet of Chinese junks sailed up the Persian Gulf carrying the famous wares of the Yüeh kilns to far off Samarra and distant Cairo. Turk, Arab, Persian and Jew and the many races of India brought their

merchandise and mingled in the streets of Ch'ang An ; Mohammedans, Buddhists and Manichaeans were equally welcome at a cosmopolitan court. The Emperors Hsüan Tsung and Su Tsung outdid all others in their patronage of the Nestorian faith, and the former went so far as to write an inscription with his own hand for the entrance gate of the Nestorian temple in the capital. The Buddhist priest, Hsüan Tsang, had made his great pilgrimage to the shrines of India in 629. Thousands left their homes to become priests, and Buddhist monasteries sprang up all over the land. It was at once an age of great tolerance and an age of faith. Under the T'ang dynasty the dominions of China reached beyond the Palmirs ; Kashmir and Gandhara were vassals, even distant Samarkand, Bokhara and Tashkent paid tribute. The territory that China controlled was never so large again.

The thought and culture of the whole civilized world made itself at home at the T'ang capital, which so impressed the Japanese that they borrowed it wholesale and laid out Kyoto brick by brick in imitation. The poems of the period leave us with the picture of a highly civilized and cultivated existence which had no parallel elsewhere in its day ; while in Europe Goth and Vandal were falling on the remains of the Roman Empire and the first missionaries from Lindisfarne were carrying Christianity to the barbarians of Great Britain. As Waley puts it, " At that period Ch'ang An was the capital of the world, as Rome was in the Middle Ages and Paris is to-day. Later China was to become not the centre of the great world but a world by herself apart."

The T'ang dynasty lasted from 618 to 907 under the rule of twenty-one emperors, and, save for the usurpation of the

Empress Wu Hou in 684, there was nothing to disturb the peace of the Empire from the accession of the second T'ang emperor T'ai Tsung in 627 to the rebellion of An Lu-shan in 755. This period of uninterrupted prosperity under stable governments provided the patronage and leisure for the cultivation of the arts. Most of the T'ang emperors were great lovers of poetry and some of them poets.

The second emperor and real founder of the T'ang line Li Shih-min, better known as T'ang T'ai Tsung (627-650), was a contemporary of the Great Emperor Theodosius, whose ambassador reached Ch'ang An in 640. T'ai Tsung was a great administrator and his vast empire under six viceroys stretched from the Great Wall of China to Annam, from Tibet to Korea.

The T'angs were devoted to Taoism ; they held that they were descended from its patriarch Lao Tzū, while their interest in Buddhism, though intermittent, has passed into a proverb. It was Taoism, and to a lesser extent Buddhism, which supplied the inspiration for the romantic and highly imaginative writings in which the period excelled. The legends and the fairy stories of Taoism appealed strongly to their palates. No fewer than three, if not four, of the T'ang emperors died poisoned by drugs in their search for the elixir of life.<sup>1</sup>

Buddhism was not lacking in its devotees during the dynasty, though it suffered severe persecutions towards the

<sup>1</sup> Mu Tsung (821-824), we are told, died from an overdose of the medicine of immortality. Wu Tsung (841-847), ensnared in the same search by an adept, succumbed to disease, his bones dissolved by drugs. But this did not prevent his successor, Hsüan Tsung (847-859), who was "fond of immortals," from suffering the same fate.

end of the dynasty. The piety of the Empress Wu Chao<sup>1</sup> was particularly celebrated. Another T'ang emperor to favour Buddhism was Hsien Tsung<sup>2</sup> (806-821), who in 819 caused a relic of Buddha to be kept three days in the palace and then to pass in procession through all the Buddhist temples throughout the land. It was on this occasion that the Minister of Justice, Han Yü, presented a petition against the worship of Buddha which has become a model of literary style.

The apex of the T'ang culture was reached in the reign of

<sup>1</sup> This remarkable woman, originally a concubine of the Emperor T'ai Tsung, was retired into a Buddhist nunnery on his death, from which she was brought out by the Empress of his son Kao Tsung as a rival to a favourite Hsiao Shu. She supplanted not only Hsiao Shu, but the Empress herself in his favours. Both were murdered by her creatures and she assumed a complete control over the Emperor, who suffered from inflammation of the eyes. When he died she replaced him in turn by her three sons, one of whom was murdered and another banished because they were not amenable to her wishes. It was not until 705 that her second son Chung Tsung forced her to abdicate at the age of seventy-five, when she was old and sick. When she had killed or exiled all those who disagreed with her, she settled down to celebrate the greatness of Buddha and filled the land with carvings and temples and great copper statues to his honour. Her daughter, the Princess T'ai Ping, who planned a rebellion but was compelled to take her own life, and her daughter-in-law, the Empress Wei, who murdered her husband for fear he might discover her amorous escapades, had all her ambition but none of her ability.

<sup>2</sup> This Emperor also dabbled in Taoist drugs. "The Emperor was fond of demi-gods and ordered a search in the Empire for adepts. A hermit Liu Pei was recommended. Pei said there was plenty of supernatural herbage on the T'ien T'ai mountain (in Chekiang); he was created governor of the district in spite of the remonstrance of high officials." He died in a fit, but the common belief was that a eunuch assassinated him.



the Emperor Hsüan Tsung<sup>1</sup> (715-756)—he abdicated and died in 762—known as Ming Huang, when Li Po, Tu Fu, Wang Wei, Mêng Hao-jan and Ts'ên Ts'an were writing poetry. The chief events of his reign<sup>2</sup> are continuously referred to in the poems. It lasted forty-four years and was shattered by the rebellion of An Lu-shan in 756. By 765 the

<sup>1</sup> He was a great patron of the arts. He founded the famous Academy of Music called the Hua Lin Yuan. When they played to him, if any note was out of tune the Emperor recognized it and corrected it. He even composed himself an air called "Orioles in Spring" and ninety-two pieces for the *chieh* drum. He also played on a reed pipe. His court was full of rope-walkers, butting experts, performing horses, "who threw up their heads and switched their tails and pranced in rhythm to the air of 'Inverting the wine-cup'; their bridles of gold and silver, their manes plaited with pearls." Elephants and rhinoceroses, we are told, were brought into the arena and made to perform to music. Ming Huang was also passionately fond of polo and cock-fighting. He played polo with his harem on horses decorated with tassels and bells and mirrors, with balls of vermilion wood.

<sup>2</sup> The story of the Emperor's infatuation for the Lady Yang is as famous as that of Helen of Troy and has been celebrated ever since in play and ballad. It was a sordid story, for she entered the palace as a concubine to his son, Prince Shou, and was transferred to his father's harem when the Emperor was already over sixty. This plump beauty acquired a domination over the ageing monarch. It was the extravagance of this woman and her creatures that brought about the rebellion of An Lu-shan, who was a Khitan general. He is said to have been captured as a boy in Liaotang (S. Manchuria) and sold to an officer in the Chinese northern garrison as a slave. He seems to have coveted both her person and the kingdom. He is described as "very fat, his stomach overhanging his knees; he looked simple, but was crafty and ready for a reply before his majesty. When the Emperor pointed to his stomach and jokingly asked what he kept there, he replied, 'Nothing but a red heart.' When seated with the Emperor and the Lady Yang, whom he had before begged to adopt him as a son, he first saluted the lady; when ordered to give

rebellion had been completely extinguished, but it was too late. Hsüan Tsung had died in 762, a broken-hearted man. His capital was partially destroyed and never recovered its past glories. The poets and painters and musicians that he had attracted to it were scattered to the winds. The toleration and cosmopolitanism that it had nursed became things of the past. Buddhism never properly recovered from the subsequent persecutions. Nestorians and Manichæans were exterminated within a generation.<sup>1</sup>

None of the subsequent emperors except Tê Tsung (780-805) reigned for twenty-five years. When their feeble health was not ruined by drugs, they abdicated or came to a violent death. Ching Tsung (825-826), Chao Tsung (889-904), Hsi Tsung (874-889) and Chao Hsuan (905) were either assassinated or murdered by eunuchs. Shun Tsung (805-806) became dumb and died from a paralysis of the tongue. They lacked personal authority and the insubordination of rebellious a reason he said it was a foreign custom the mother first and then the father, he himself being a T'u-chüeh (Turk)."

In 751 the Emperor built him a palace regardless of expense and ordered the premier and the imperial princes to attend him on his birthday, when he and the Lady Yang gave him rich presents. However, in 755 he rose in rebellion at the head of 150,000 men, seized Ch'ang An and assumed the title of Emperor while the real emperor fled to Szechwan. At Hanyang the Emperor's troops mutinied and killed Yang Kuo Chung, Yang Kuei Fei and her sisters. Meanwhile Fang Kuang, who had been sent against An Lu-shan, was defeated at Chen T'ao Hsien, in Shansi, where the whole imperial army was destroyed. Two years later An Lu-shan, now blind, was murdered by his own son, An Ching-hsiu.

<sup>1</sup> Abu Zaid, an Arab traveller who went to China towards the close of the T'ang dynasty, says that when Canton was sacked by Huang Ch'ao in 879, 120,000 foreigners—Jews, Arabs and Zoroastrians—were massacred.

governors in the provinces, the greed of the eunuchs and the increasing incursions of Tibetans hurried the dynasty to its end.

There is a certain futility about all translations of poetry. For the beauty of poetry lies not so much in what the poets have to say but how they say it, and this expression of their personality is too delicate a bloom to admit grafting on to another tree. The essence may be preserved but the movement is sure to be lost in translation, which can be exact or readable but scarcely ever both. "When the dictionary is brought to the table the Muse flies out of the window." Quite another problem arises from a need of the knowledge of the original background. In the case of China it is so alien to the West that any translation must be accompanied by a string of footnotes which will distract the attention of the reader, if indeed he troubles to read them at all, but without which much of the text is meaningless. Perhaps the appreciation of Chinese poetry in England is better left to that very small number who know the language; and yet it may also be argued it is better to read it in a translation than never read it at all. This is the only excuse that the translator can bring forward.

I have found the greatest difficulty in translating to avoid what might be called the house agent terms such as "vista," "tranquillity," "rustic retreat," which are continually appearing in the original. My original intention was to publish the complete two hundred and ninety-eight poems, but I found on revision so many of the same themes are repeated over and over again as to be monotonous. And in such a large collection some of the poems are bound to be mediocre or needlessly complicated by historical and literary

allusions. The space in this series does not permit more than a very limited selection. But I hope this volume may be followed by others. The task of deciding which poems shall stay and which shall go has been a difficult one.

In Chinese editions the poems are arranged under metres ; an alternative plan would be to place them under authors, but I have arranged them under subject-matter as best calculated to appeal to the general public.

Odd poems from the collection have already been translated at different times into English by European, Chinese and Japanese with varying success. Chinese and Japanese translators, however accurate, seldom possess sufficient knowledge of English idiom to prevent their work from becoming insipid, while those Englishmen who possess a fortunate style are rarely reliable sinologues. Mr. Arthur Waley stands almost alone in this respect. I believe I am not misquoting Mr. Lin Yu Tang when I state that in his opinion he is the only happy translator of Chinese poetry. I am also partial to Mr. Fletcher, who is very little known.<sup>1</sup> I have made a clumsy attempt to tread in their footsteps.

There exists one fairly complete translation in English of the three hundred T'ang poems under the title of *The Jade Mountain* <sup>2</sup> by an American, Mr. Witter Bynner, with whom I should join issue on so many points of translation and inter-

<sup>1</sup> See *Gems of Chinese Poetry* and *More Gems of Chinese Poetry*.

<sup>2</sup> "This book," says the publisher, "is the result of a decade of intense labour during which Mr. Bynner, in collaboration with the distinguished scholar, Dr. Kiang Kang-hu, revised and studied and polished these 311 poems until every shade of their meaning had been rendered into English verse of a quality comparable to the original."

pretation that I will not pursue our differences. The Chinese language is at once so terse and so ambiguous that it provides a thousand and one puzzling problems at every turn which offer almost endless opportunities to the unfriendly critic. Only an intimate knowledge of Chinese culture and Chinese ways of thought can hope to elucidate many passages ; often the Chinese commentators themselves are at a loss or disagree.

These translations are the fruits of notes preserved from a poetry class, instigated by myself, which met for an hour once a week at the School of Oriental Studies under Sir Reginald Johnston from April 1932 to June 1937. I am under no illusion that I should ever have possessed the scholarship to tackle them alone. It was the enthusiasm that Sir Reginald was able to convey to this small class that conceived them. He died before I was able to submit them to his criticism ; but I know that he thought all such translations were worthless and confessed to having destroyed many of his own.

Without the many written suggestions and scholarly corrections of Mr. A. E. Wood, through whose hands they have passed, they would never have been printed. I am only too conscious that he could have translated them so much better himself ; he is in no way responsible for any fault a sinologue may find in them, for I have often clung tenaciously to my errors.

Lastly, I have to thank Miss Jourdain for reading the typescript and making many valuable suggestions.

I

OF NATURE AND LANDSCAPE

*Peasant Life by the Wêi River*

by WANG WEI

OBLIQUELY the sun sets on the village  
The lanes are full of sheep and cattle going home ;  
The gnarled peasant waits for his herdsboy son  
Leaning on a staff before the door of his thatched hut.  
The pheasants crow amid the sprouting corn  
And the silkworm sleeps among the shredded mulberry  
leaves.

The farmer shoulders his hoe,  
He meets and talks with his friends.  
Such a life free from all extravagance is much to be desired,  
I envy this simple life and moodily turn to murmur the  
"Home again" song.<sup>1</sup>

*Written in my Library in the Mouth of the Pass to the  
Censor, Mr. Yang*

by CHIEN CH'Ï

MOUNTAIN gullies and ravines lead to a thatched cottage,  
Misty clouds rise before the doorway curtained by creepers,

<sup>1</sup> A song from the Confucian *Book of Odes*.

The bamboos are admirable when fresh with rain.  
In the hills we love the time of sunset,  
The idle egret comes home early to roost,  
The autumn flowers fall later than they should.  
My servant boy sweeps the grassy path,  
For yesterday I made arrangements for the visit of an old  
friend.

*At Hsi Chien (Western Suburb) in the District of  
Ch'u Chou*

by WEI YING-WU

I LOVE to gaze alone at the dark grasses growing beside the  
river,  
When the orioles are calling in the thick woods.  
The spring tides come down swiftly swollen by the rains,  
By the deserted ferry the boat swings to and fro.

*On a Dark Autumn in a Hill Hut<sup>1</sup>*

by WANG WEI

ON the empty hill new rain has fallen ;  
Out of the dusk comes the autumn.  
The bright moon shines forth between the pines,  
Above the rocks flows the clear stream,  
Babel in the bamboos proclaims the washing girls are returning  
home,  
The lotus swing beneath the fisherman's boat,  
The fragrance of spring sighs and expires,  
How can we detain it before it goes ?

<sup>1</sup> Fletcher, *Gems of Chinese Poetry*, p. 132.

*The Fisherman*<sup>1</sup>

by LIU TSUNG-YÜAN

THE fisherman at night sleeps near the Western Precipice,  
At dawn he draws clear water from the Hsiang<sup>2</sup> and burns  
the bamboos of Ch'u.<sup>2</sup>

Mists disperse and the sun rises but no man comes,  
Only (is heard) the squeaking of his oars among the green  
hills and waters.

Turning round I see the horizon as if it merged with the flood.  
Over the precipice the aimless clouds chase each other across  
the sky.

*At Li Chou*<sup>3</sup> *Crossing the Southern Ferry*<sup>4</sup>

by WÊN TING-YUN

A VAST expanse of waters without a ripple or wave facing the  
setting sun,

A rugged island stretching away to join the blue foothills.  
At the edge of the ferry horses neigh as they see those that  
have already embarked.<sup>5</sup>

By the side of the willows men are resting,  
Waiting for the boat to take them home.

<sup>1</sup> The first four lines deal with the fisherman, the last two with the poet's reactions. Some commentators have thought the last two lines are an excrescence, but So Tung-po would retain them.

<sup>2</sup> Hunan.

<sup>3</sup> Li Chou, King Yüan Hsien district, Szechwan.

<sup>4</sup> This poem gives a lovely picture of a Chinese country scene beside a local ferry, such as might still be seen in South China.

<sup>5</sup> On the water the horses neigh as they see the oars at work ferrying them over.



Over clumps of grasses among the sand a flock of seagulls  
scatter,  
Over a vast expanse of water meadows a single heron flies.  
How would they know that I was embarking as one who  
embarks in search of Fan Li<sup>1</sup>?  
Here on the mists and waters of the five lakes he tried to  
forget the troubles of the world.

*At Anchor in the Evening by the Maple Bridge*<sup>2</sup>

by CHANG CHI

THE moon sets, the crows caw, hoar frost is in the air,  
By the maples at the riverside twinkles the light of the  
fishermen's boats as I take my troubled rest.  
Outside the city of Soochow stands the Han Shan Monastery  
And at midnight there comes to me in my boat the tolling of  
the temple bell.

*A Spring Morning*<sup>3</sup>

by MENG HAO-JAN

ASLEEP in the springtime one is not aware of the dawn  
Till everywhere the birds are heard calling,  
But last night I heard the sounds of wind and rain.  
I wonder how many blossoms have broken away?

<sup>1</sup> Fan Li, the minister who directed the gift of the beauty Hsieh Shih to the Prince of Yüeh. He is supposed to have retired from service and to have spent his declining years as a hermit.

<sup>2</sup> Chinese commentaries say "everyone says this is a good poem, but no one can say why it is so good." See *Gems*, p. 159.

<sup>3</sup> See *More Gems*, p. 135.

*The Difficulties of the Road to Szechwan*<sup>1</sup>

by LI PO

How precipitous and lofty is the road to Szechwan,  
Harder to scale than the road to Heaven ;  
Ts'an Tsung<sup>2</sup> and Yu Fu<sup>2</sup> opened out this kingdom.  
How remote that time seems to-day.  
After forty-eight thousand years they penetrated the Chin  
barrier and there was intercourse between the two  
countries ;  
Towards the west the Tai Pa has paths only birds can climb  
Leading across the peak of Omei Shan.  
The earth crumpled and the mountains were riven ; stout  
heroes died.  
Then afterwards they made a road of ladders and stone  
bridges like a connected chain.  
Above is the Kao Pao Mountain, where six dragons revolve  
around the sun ;  
Below rebellious waves beat and recoil ;  
Even the yellow cranes find it hard to pass this way,  
And gibbons wishing to scale it climb and clutch in great  
distress.  
On the Ch'ing Ni range how the road turns and twists,  
In a hundred steps nine bends beneath rock and cliff,  
Panting we touch the constellation of Shan and tread the  
constellation of Ching.  
As we gaze up the breath labours under our ribs ;

<sup>1</sup> Translated Obata, *Works of Li Po*, pp. 109-111 ; also Fletcher, *More Gems of Chinese Poetry*, pp. 27-33.

<sup>2</sup> Two legendary rulers. Ts'an Tsung was supposed to have been a descendant of the Yellow Emperor and the first King of Shu.

Clasping our hands to our breasts we sit down with a long sigh.

From our western wandering when will we return ?

How hazardous are such cliffs and rocks impossible to climb,  
Around us naught but sad birds calling from aged trees,  
Male pursuing female through the woods.

Or again we hear the nightjar calling sadly under the evening  
moon among the empty hills.

How hard is the road to Szechwan,

Harder to scale than the road to Heaven.

When one hears only of its dangers cheeks turn pale.

Peak upon peak touch the heavens with scarce a foot between ;  
Blasted pines topple over to lean out over the uttermost  
abyss ;

Plunging cataracts and hurtling rapids struggle and boil in  
chorus ;

Waves dashing on rocky cliffs roll boulders down ten  
thousand gullies with a noise like thunder.

These are the dangers all must face who come this way.

Alas ! for the wanderers from afar who travel such a road.

Why are they come on such a journey ?

The " sword pavilion " stands august and dignified on the  
lofty and rock-crowned heights.

Here a man could close this frontier pass

And ten thousand could not open it.

Ah ! if the man who holds it became a traitor

And were to turn fox or wolf !

In the morning we shun tigers,

In the evening we flee from snakes,

Teeth that grind and suck blood,

Killing men like hemp.

Chang-tu has its pleasures,  
But how to be compared with the happiness of an early  
return home.

How hard are the roads of Szechwan,  
Harder to scale than the road to heaven.  
I turn my body to the west and gaze with a long sad sigh.

*A Poem composed on the way from Hsia Kow<sup>1</sup> to the  
Parrot Island, in the evening, gazing towards Yoyang:<sup>2</sup>  
sent to Yüan, the Supervising Censor*

by LIU CHANG CHING

No waves on the sandspit, no mist on the islands  
As one thinks of the tragedy of the guest of Ch'u<sup>3</sup> one's  
thoughts seem yet more far away.  
At the mouth of the Han River as the evening sun slants  
a few birds flight home.  
The autumn waters of the Tung T'ing Lake flow away until  
they meet the sky.  
To the lonely city<sup>4</sup> backed by the mountain range comes  
the cold ring of the hooves of Tartar horses.<sup>5</sup>  
Where I moor my boat at evening the lonely outposts over-  
look the river.

<sup>1</sup> Hankow.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. Yo Chou in Kiangsu.

<sup>3</sup> Ch'ü Yüan, who lived in the fourth century B.C. When an exile he drowned himself in the Mi-lo River, and on the dragonboat festival held on the 5th day of the 5th month to search for his body, it was fashionable for exiles to remember him.

<sup>4</sup> i.e. Hanyang in Hupei.

<sup>5</sup> The author is on active service.

Chia I<sup>1</sup> sent memorials to an Emperor of the house of Han  
which caused him to be banished to Chang Sha.  
Pity for his fate has survived till to-day.

*On returning the Compliments of the Assistant  
Prefect, Chang*<sup>2</sup>

by WANG WEI

IN the evening of life tranquillity is my only joy.  
Ten thousand affairs cease to trouble the heart.  
I reflect there is no more excellent scheme than  
To give learning a miss and to return to the forests of my  
old home  
Where the wind sighs in the pines I loosen my girdle.  
When the hill moon shines I thrum the flute.  
If you ask me why I don't care for the proprieties  
(I invite you to listen while) over the estuary is wafted to  
me the fisherman's song.

*The Old Cypress*

by TU FU

BEFORE the temple of Chu-ko Liang stands an old cypress.  
Its stem is like green bronze and its roots like rocks ;

<sup>1</sup> Chia I lived in the second century B.C. He was banished to Ch'ang Sha, became tutor to a Prince of Liang and died within a year. He wrote a lament to commemorate Ch'ü Yüan, the dragon-boat worthy, and by implication to state his own sorrows.

<sup>2</sup> Fletcher, *More Gems*, p. 107.

Its bark scarred by frosts ; (its fronds) washed bright by the  
 rains,  
 While its circumference is forty spans round ;  
 Its dark leaves stretch up into the heavens for two thousand  
 feet.  
 Here prince and minister of old would meet when occasion  
 allowed,<sup>1</sup>  
 And to-day this tree is still revered.  
 When clouds come its vapours blow to the chasms of far-off  
 Wu<sup>2</sup> ;  
 When the moon shines forth its (the tree's) cold whiteness  
 seems to reach to the snowy mountains.  
 I have in my mind yesterday's road winding to the east of  
 the pavilion of Chin Kiang  
 Where the Military Marquis<sup>3</sup> and his former Emperor<sup>4</sup> share  
 a remote and secret shrine.  
 The towering tree from of old has stood upon the plain,  
 Doors and windows (of the shrine) open upon a striking  
 landscape.<sup>5</sup>  
 Deep, deep down spread (her roots),  
 She crouches low yet holds her ground.

<sup>1</sup> Chu-ko Liang, A.D. 181-234, placed Liu Pei on the throne of Shu (Szechwan). A mechanical and mathematical genius and military tactician, who could foretell the course of natural phenomena and even control them. He perfected the Eight Dispositions, a series of tactics, and the famous device of wooden oxen and running horses as a means of transport, through which he is said to have invaded Burma. The story of the defeat of Ts'ao Ts'ao at the Red Wall and his eventual death in battle are told in the story of the Three Kingdoms.

<sup>2</sup> Kiangsu.

<sup>3</sup> Chu-ko Liang.

<sup>4</sup> Liu Pei.

<sup>5</sup> Alternative translation, "But within a quiet and painted temple the doors and walls look blankly down."

Her branches high up above, so strong, have weathered many  
a fierce gale ;

For her strength and stay are of another world.

(And she stands) straight and true as when she sprouted, for  
she is the work of the gods.

When a great palace falls into decay, pillars and beams are  
needed.<sup>1</sup>

Ten thousand oxen shaking their heads (are needed to drag)  
a very mountain in weight.

There is no need for (great timber) to produce extravagant  
memorials, its value should be too well known.

It is easy to cut down,<sup>2</sup> but who can convey it (to the place  
where it can be used) ?

Sometimes unavoidably its bitter heart is eaten away by ants,  
Yet those fragrant leaves to the end of their days could <sup>3</sup> have  
sheltered the *luan* <sup>4</sup> and the phoenix.

Let the ambitious and retiring alike withhold their sighs.  
Of old it was found difficult to use great material.

<sup>1</sup> Alternative translation, "When a great palace falls into decay it is used for pillars and beams," i.e. broken up for materials. The author proceeds to compare himself to big timber, which has either been used and demolished and thrown aside or has not been used at all because it was too big to handle.

<sup>2</sup> Literally, "there is no embargo on its being cut down."

<sup>3</sup> If we adopt the idea that of a palace broken up for building material (see footnote, line 19), the line should run : " Yet these fragrant leaves have at one time sheltered the *luan* and the phoenix.

<sup>4</sup> A green phoenix.

*Written on an Autumn Day on the way to the Capital while  
(stopping) at the Tung Kuan Posting House<sup>1</sup>*

by HSÜ HUN

IN the evening the red leaves are whispering as they fall,  
As in the "long pavilion" I quaff a cup of wine.  
Scattered clouds pass over T'ai Hua<sup>2</sup> Mountain,  
Rain falls at intervals on the Chung Tiao ranges.<sup>3</sup>  
The colour of the trees follows the pass into the distance.  
I can hear the river (in spate) on its long journey to the sea.  
I shall reach the capital on the morrow;  
I shall still dream of the fisherman and the woodcutter.<sup>4</sup>

*While living at My Tutor's in the Hills and awaiting Mr.  
Ting who does not come<sup>5</sup>*

by MÊNG HAO-JAN

THE evening sun crosses the western passes,  
And all the ravines are suddenly dipped in darkness.  
The moon among the pines gives birth to the cool of the  
evening,  
And wind and stream fill the ear with their music.  
The woodcutters have returned home almost to a man,  
And clouds of birds settle quietly in their roosts.  
It is already past the time appointed for your coming.  
My lonely lute waits for you among the creepers.

<sup>1</sup> This poem is wonderfully skilful in its suggestion of a still autumn evening after a storm. See Fletcher, *Mora Gems of Chinese Verse*, p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> Hua Shan in Shensi.

<sup>3</sup> i.e. Shao Tung, Shensi.

<sup>4</sup> The country life.

<sup>5</sup> Translated by Fletcher, *Gems of Chinese Verse*, p. 134.



*Weeds*<sup>1</sup>

by PO CHÜ-I

LUXURIANTLY grows the grass of the plains ;  
Each year it withers to sprout afresh.  
The prairie fires may burn it but they do not destroy its roots,  
The spring winds may flatten it but it comes to life again,<sup>2</sup>  
Its fragrance from afar invades the old-established way,  
Its lush green stems envelop the walls of the deserted city,  
And they speed the king and his grandsons on their way.  
Everywhere you look it fills the landscape with its vigorous  
growth.

<sup>1</sup> The title "Weeds" covers a hidden reference to officials round the throne. Fletcher, *Gems of Chinese Verse*, p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps "with the break of spring it comes to life again."

## II

### ON DRINKING WINE

*Drinking alone under the Moon*

*by LI PO*

AMONG the flowers with a kettle of wine  
I pledge myself without any company ;  
I raise the cup and drink to the bright moon  
Who will with my shadow make up a company of three.  
The moon unfortunately is no drinker.  
My purposeless shadow follows my body,  
Yet for the time I make a party with my shadow and the  
moon.

Happy we speed the coming of the spring ;  
I sing, the moonbeams waver ;  
I dance, and my shadow bobs backwards and forwards.  
While we are sober we are all happy together,  
After we are drunk each goes his own way.  
To pledge a friendship that is free from earthly passions  
We must meet in the vast deeps of the clouds and in the river  
of stars.

*On descent of the Chung Nan<sup>1</sup> Mountain passing the Hu  
Ssü Hermitage and halting to take Wine*

by LI PO

In the evening I descend from the green hills,  
The mountain moon follows me on the homeward path.  
Turning my head I see the path I have travelled  
Green—green—(it winds) athwart the hill-slopes.<sup>2</sup>  
Hand in hand we come to a farmer's cottage<sup>3</sup>;  
A tender boy opens the thorn gate,  
Green bamboos darken the path I tread,  
Green creeping plants brush my clothes as I go by.  
Welcome words greet me at this quiet resting-place,<sup>4</sup>  
Good wine is passed round.  
Long we sing to the music of the "Wind in the Pines."<sup>5</sup>  
Our song is not finished till the Milky Way fades.  
I am tipsy, you too are light-hearted.  
Expanding under the influence of the wine  
All the cares of this world are forgotten.

<sup>1</sup> Fifteen miles south of the T'ang capital Ch'ang An in Shensi.

<sup>2</sup> An alternative translation: "Dark. Dark (the shadows) athwart the hill slopes."

<sup>3</sup> The poet seems to meet the hermit on the way down and together they proceed to the hermit's dwelling.

<sup>4</sup> An alternative reading: "Joyfully I cry, 'This is the place for me to rest.'"

<sup>5</sup> One commentary says that this refers to a song called the "Wind in the Pines," possibly connected with T'ao Hung-ching (A.D. 451-536), whose chief amusements were to listen to the breeze blowing through the pines he had planted in his courtyard, but this line does not refer to a song but to the actual wind in the trees. "Long" perhaps gives an undue emphasis to the first character in the line, which may indicate a type of ballad.

## A Drinking Song<sup>1</sup>

by LI PO

Do you not see how the waters of the Yellow River come  
down from the sky?  
They flow swiftly to the sea and do not return.  
Do you not see how the bright mirrors of the high halls sadly  
reflect your white locks?  
In the morning (of life) they were like black silk, in the  
evening (of life) they have turned to snow.  
If you would taste of life and enjoy it to the limit,  
Do not let the golden goblet stand empty under the  
moon.  
All talents come from heaven and they must be used.  
If ten thousand gold pieces are scattered to the winds, yet  
are you not repaid?  
Cook the sheep and slaughter the ox and make merry;  
Throw off at one sitting three hundred cups of wine.  
Come Ts'ên<sup>2</sup> my friend and young Tan Ch'iu,<sup>2</sup>  
Here comes the wine. Fill up your cups.  
I will sing a song with you; incline your ear and listen.  
Bells, drums and rare delicacies, of what worth are they?  
I would rather drink deeply and never wake sober.  
Sages and saints lie dead and forgotten;  
Only the names of famous drinkers are remembered.

<sup>1</sup> One of the most translated poems in the Chinese language. See Obata, pp. 84, 85; Fletcher, *Gems of Chinese Verse*, pp. 16, 17; Waley, *Asiatic Review*; Lowell, *Fir Flower Tablet*; St. Denys, *Chanson à Boire*.

<sup>2</sup> Two friends of Li Po. Ts'ên Chêng-chün, a poet, and Yüan Tan Ch'iu, a Taoist.

The Prince of Ch'ên<sup>1</sup> of old gave a feast in the Ping lo Temple.

For one measure of wine he paid twenty thousand cash.  
He threw off restraint and jested and enjoyed himself.  
Mine host, why do you say you have no money?  
Wine simply must be bought for me to drink with you;  
Take the dappled charger and these thousand guinea sables,  
Call the boy to exchange them for good wine  
And I will drink with you and drown ten thousand old sorrows.

*The Arrival of a Guest (to Vice-Prefect Ts'ui)*

by TU FU

It is springtime, to the south and north of my cottage the floods are out.

All I see is a crowd of seagulls that visit me day by day.  
The petal-strewn path is not yet swept for a guest;  
For you, the first, I open my thatched door to-day.  
The market is far away, I can but give you vegetable dishes with no second choice.

My family is too poor for a good goblet of wine, there are only old<sup>2</sup> spirits.

Are you willing to drink with my old neighbour across the way;

He is only separated by that wattle hedge and I will call him over here to help us finish off the wine that is left.

<sup>1</sup> Ts'ao Chih of the Wei dynasty in the period of the Three Kingdoms.

<sup>2</sup> Chinese wine does not keep.

## *The Wind and the Rain*

by LI SHANG-YIN

I AM as sad as the "precious two-edged sword essay."<sup>1</sup>  
I have been opposed and hindered and so it will be to the end  
of my days ;  
Again the leaves are yellowing in the wind and the rain,  
Yet in the "Blue Tower"<sup>2</sup> pipe and strings continue as  
before.  
My new acquaintances are shabby and vulgar,  
My old friends that are tied to me by real sympathy, separated  
from me.  
My heart is broken—now for the Hsin fêng<sup>3</sup> wine ;  
How much will it cost to drown my sorrows ?

## *A Song of Wêi Ch'êng<sup>4</sup>*

by WANG WEI

THE morning rains of Wei Ch'êng moisten the light dust.  
At the guest house the willow buds are green.  
Let me beg of you to drink with me one more cup of wine.  
When you get to the west of Yang Pass there will be no old  
friends.

<sup>1</sup> Written by Yüan-chên for the Emperor Wu, seventh century.

<sup>2</sup> Houses of the singing girls.

<sup>3</sup> A district in Kiangsu.

<sup>4</sup> In Shensi. The poem is also well known as the Yang An Ch'u  
and is taken as a type of farewell poem.

*In passing an Old Friend's Farm*

by MÊNG HAO-JAN

AN old friend has prepared a chicken and millet dumpling  
And has invited me to his home in the fields.  
Green trees surround his village on every side,  
Blue hills slope away outside the wall.  
At the open window the kitchen garden faces me.  
We drink wine and talk of mulberry and flax ;  
Wait till the ninth day of the ninth moon,  
I will come again and sample your chrysanthemum wine.

*The Road that is Hard to Travel*

by LI PO

*Part I*

IN my gold cup clear wine worth ten thousand coins a measure,  
In my jade bowl delicious dainties costing ten thousand cash,  
Yet I dash down the cup and throw down the chopsticks,  
And am not able to eat.<sup>1</sup>  
I pull out my sword and gaze anxiously to the four quarters,  
For my heart dreams of other things.  
I wish to cross the Yellow River but the ice binds the ferry.  
I wish to climb the T'ai Hang <sup>2</sup> Mountains but the snow hides  
the sky,  
Or to sit at leisure fishing at the side of some mountain stream,  
Or I would sit in a boat dreaming of sailing in the sun.

<sup>1</sup> i.e. luxury cannot satisfy.

<sup>2</sup> ? Shantung.

Hard is the way, hard is the way, there are many twisting roads. Which am I to take?

To ride the wind and break the waves will some day be my lot  
And I shall hang out a sail of cloud to bridge the deep sea.

*Part II*

The way of life is like the azure sky,

I alone cannot see the way.

I am ashamed when I think how I associated once with the gay  
young sparks of Ch'ang An

And at "red chickens"<sup>1</sup> and "white dogs"<sup>1</sup> gambled for  
pears and chestnuts.<sup>2</sup>

Ah! Could I but tap a sword to music and sing a bitter  
song<sup>3</sup>

Or like Ts'ou Yang<sup>4</sup> trail my skirts in the hall of the local  
prince.

But what satisfaction did he get from that?

In Huai Yin<sup>5</sup> even the vagabonds laughed at Han Hsin<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> May refer to cock-fighting and dog-racing. But possibly games in which counters called red cocks or white dogs were used.

<sup>2</sup> He was so poor by the end that he had to substitute pears and chestnuts for cash.

<sup>3</sup> Reference to Ping (Fêng) Huan, one of the poorest retainers of Mêng Chang, a feudal lord of the period of the Warring States. By singing bitter songs to a tune played on a sword Huan ingratiated himself in the eyes of his employer and obtained ample opportunity for displaying his abilities.

<sup>4</sup> This man appears to have lived in the period of the Warring States, and to have been sufficiently at home in the houses of the great to have disposed of conventions.

<sup>5</sup> A district in Honan.

<sup>6</sup> Han Hsin, a famous general, who helped to establish the Han dynasty; was laughed at because although he brandished a sword he was put to shame by the local butcher.



And in Han times the nobles were jealous of Chia Shêng.<sup>1</sup>  
 Have you not heard how in olden days Chao Wang treated  
     Kuo Kuei<sup>2</sup> with respect  
 And did not hesitate to sweep the ground and bend down to  
     do it.  
 Chi Hsing<sup>3</sup> and Lo I<sup>3</sup> he introduced into the imperial favour,  
     in gratitude for which  
 They strained all their talents in his service.<sup>4</sup>  
 Now Chao Wang's bones lie entwined in the tangled grasses  
 Who will sweep his yellow gold pavilion now?<sup>5</sup>  
 The way of life is hard, "let us go home."<sup>6</sup>

### *Part III*

If you have ears, do not wash them in the streams of Ying.<sup>7</sup>  
 If you have a mouth, do not eat the bracken of the Shou  
     Yang<sup>8</sup> Hills;

<sup>1</sup> Another character from the Shih Chi who was born in Loyang and patronized as a young man by the Emperor Hsiao Wên. He incurred the jealousy of the older ministers, who slandered him and had him degraded.

<sup>2</sup> In the time of the Warring States King Chao of Yen treated with especial respect a minister Kuo Kuei.

<sup>3</sup> These two men Kuo Kuei introduced into the palace; they seem to have attracted more than their share of imperial patronage.

<sup>4</sup> Lit. "exhausted their liver and split their gall."

<sup>5</sup> A pavilion where Chao Wang entertained scholars.

<sup>6</sup> Reference to the title of an essay by T'ao Yüan Ming, which he wrote on the subject of his retirement from official life.

<sup>7</sup> When the mythical Emperor Yao asked Hsü Yu to take over the government from him, Yu washed his ears in the River Ying in order to destroy the very suggestion.

<sup>8</sup> Po I and Shu Ch'i, eldest and youngest sons of Ku Chu Chün, fled together because of a dispute raised by their subjects as to which should succeed the father to the throne. They entered the service

If you have thoughts like that, abandon them and mix with the world.

To be without fame is best.

What is the use of exalted solitude like that of the clouds or the moon?

I see that from ancient times till modern that the greatest people,

When they made their names, if they did not retire all came to grief.

Tzū Hsü<sup>1</sup> was cast into the River Wu,

Ch'ü Yuan<sup>2</sup> threw himself into the River Hsiang.

Lu Chi<sup>3</sup> had great ability, but how could he preserve himself.

Li Ssü<sup>4</sup> was divested of office and came to a bitter end.

of Wu Wang soon after the death of his father and tried to prevent him from attacking his feudal prince because (1) it was unfilial and too soon after the funeral, (2) because Chou was his feudal prince. But their advice was not appreciated and they had to flee for their lives to die eating bracken on the Shou Yang Hills. This incident took place at the beginning of the Chou period.

<sup>1</sup> Surname Wu, who lived in the period of the Spring and Autumn Annals; he committed suicide with a sword presented to him by his Prince because the Prince would not take his advice when he advised Wu that it must not go to war with Yüeh. His corpse was sealed up in a sack and thrown into the river. Giles, *Biographical Dictionary*, No. 2358.

<sup>2</sup> The man for whom the Dragon Boat Festival is celebrated. He committed suicide because his advice was not followed by the Princes Huai and Huang of the Ch'in State by throwing himself into the Mi Lo River. See Giles, *Biog. Dict.*, No. 503.

<sup>3</sup> A man of great talents, who lived in the Tsin period, he was put to death by Chêng To Wang, a prince of Szechwan.

<sup>4</sup> See Giles, *Biog. Dict.*, No. 1203. Served under Ch'in Shih Huang Ti. In 219 B.C. he prompted the burning of the books, but he was a good scholar himself and invented a style of calligraphy known as the lesser seal. After trying to prevent the barbarities of his master's

At Hua Ting<sup>1</sup> the cry of the cranes is no longer heard,  
And at Shang Ts'ai<sup>2</sup> the blue falcon is seen no more.  
How can I find words to express all this.

Do you know that Chang Han<sup>3</sup> of Wu Chung was a scholar  
of great ability?

But the autumn wind came suddenly and brought thoughts  
of Chiang Tung.<sup>4</sup>

It is better to enjoy oneself during one's lifetime with a cup  
of wine.

Why should you bother to leave a deathless reputation after  
you yourself are dead?

### *In Idle Meditation*<sup>4</sup>

by TU MU

Down and out I wander over the waters with a supply of  
wine,

The girls here are like the wasp-waisted beauties of  
Ch'u,<sup>5</sup>

successor, Hu Hsi, he was impeached by the eunuch Chao Kao and  
sawn asunder in the market-place in 208 B.C.

<sup>1</sup> In Kiangsu. Lu Chi on his death-bed referred to the cry of the  
cranes he had heard there in his youth.

<sup>2</sup> Li Ssu, when he was dying, sighed and said he would never go  
out of the gate of Shang Ts'ai again with a yellow dog at his heels  
and a blue falcon on his wrist.

<sup>3</sup> Chang Han succeeded in becoming a minister of the King of Ch'i,  
but gave up his position to return to a country retreat at Chiang  
Tung, where he might drink and enjoy himself.

<sup>4</sup> The poem is written in mood of remorse at his wasted life.

<sup>5</sup> Hunan.

So light that they could dance on the palm of one's hand.<sup>1</sup>  
For ten years I have lived besotted in Yang Chou, <sup>2</sup>  
And now all that I have to show for it is the reputation for a  
light-of-love in the houses of ill fame.

<sup>1</sup> Like Chao Fei Yen of the Han dynasty.

<sup>2</sup> In Hupei.

### III

## IN THE WOMEN'S APARTMENTS

### *Grief in the Ladies' Apartments*<sup>1</sup>

by WANG CH'ANG-LING

IN the women's apartments is a young woman who does not know sorrow.

On a spring day she paints her face and goes up to the kingfisher tower.

Suddenly she notices the willow buds are bursting along the paths

And she regrets she has sent away her husband in search of military glory.

### *Air: "Souls of the River"*<sup>2</sup>

by LI YI

WHEN I married a merchant from Ch'u Tang<sup>3</sup>

Morning after morning he failed to keep his appointments.

<sup>1</sup> See *Gems*, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> The upper Yangtze, because of its rapids and gorges, is so difficult to navigate, that no merchant can be certain of going and coming at specified times. The wife watching for her husband's return and constantly disappointed and upset in her arrangements mourns the unreliability of the currents of the gorges, and also her husband's neglect.

<sup>3</sup> In the uppermost reaches of the Yangtze above I Chang.

If I had known how faithless<sup>1</sup> the tide was  
I would have married a river-side boy.<sup>2</sup>

*A Ballad of Ch'ang Kan*<sup>3</sup>

by LI PO

*Part I*

In the days when my hair first fell over my forehead  
And in play I plucked flowers before the door,  
You came riding to me on a bamboo horse.  
Throwing blue plums, we chased each other round the bed.  
Together we lived in the hamlet of Ch'ang Kan,  
In those days we were both young and innocent.  
At the age of fourteen I became your wife.  
So bashful that I dared not look up,  
I hung my head in the darkest corners.  
A thousand times you called me, but I did not answer.  
At the age of fifteen I began to come to my senses  
And plighted my troth to you till we should be dust and  
ashes together.  
We kept faith as he who clung to the post of old.<sup>4</sup>  
How should I dally on the tower seeking a husband's return?

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps faithful and not faithless; if so, it would refer to tidal waters which can be navigated punctually without trouble, but I think it is more likely she is comparing the faithless tide to an unfaithful husband.

<sup>2</sup> A longshoreman, i.e. a simple tracker of the gorges.

<sup>3</sup> Near Nanking.

<sup>4</sup> Wei Shêng of the sixth century B.C., who kept his appointment under the bridge in spite of the rising river, and was drowned still clinging to the post that supported it.

When I was sixteen you went on a far journey.  
In the gorges of Ch'u Tang foaming rapids defy the traveller.  
In the fifth month they cannot be passed in (safety).  
The monkeys lift their melancholy howls in the distant heights.

Before the door I gaze where your parting feet have trodden.  
Little by little the green moss covers them,  
Deep green moss that cannot be brushed away.  
Already the leaves are falling in the autumn wind.  
In the eighth month the yellow butterflies come ;  
They flutter in pairs over the flowers of the western garden.  
These matters touch my heart with emotion  
As I sit lonely while my bloom fades to age.  
Sooner or later you must return down the Three Gorges.  
Do not forget to send a letter informing me of your arrival,  
Then I will meet you nor fear the distant road  
Even to the Long Wind Beach.

## *Part II*

I remember that when I lived in the depths of the women's  
apartments  
I knew nothing of the dust and dirt of the outside world.  
When I married the man from Ch'ang Kan  
On the sandspit I used to watch the state of the wind,  
In the fifth month the southern wind gets up,  
And I used to think of you dropping down the river to Pa  
Ling,<sup>1</sup>  
In the eighth month the western wind rises,  
And my heart would go out to you starting along the Yangtze.

<sup>1</sup> Honan.

I see you so little and you are so long away.  
 How many days will it take you to reach Hsiang T'an?  
 In my dreams I ride the wind-tossed waves:  
 Yesterday evening a cruel wind swept across (the waters).  
 Its breath broke down the trees at the river mouth.  
 Wide, wide the dark expanse of water ruffled by the  
     wind  
 And the traveller is swallowed up in it.  
 Oh that you could borrow a piebald steed from the floating  
     clouds,<sup>1</sup>  
 I would meet you east of the Orchis Island,  
 Just like the Mandarin duck and drake sitting beside green  
     rushes,  
 Or a pair of kingfishers on an embroidered screen.  
 In self-pity I remember how, when I was little more than  
     fifteen,  
 My complexion was red like peach blossom.  
 Who would be a merchant's wife?  
 Fearful of waters and winds alike.

*Bestowed in Farewell*

by TU MU

*Part I*

SHE is slender and elegant and not yet fourteen,  
 Beautiful as the tips of the cardamum buds<sup>2</sup> in early  
     spring.

<sup>1</sup> Be very speedy.

<sup>2</sup> Cardamum buds were famous for their slender beauty, glossy skin, and fragrant smell. Hence the term was applied to beauties.



Although the spring wind may blow the whole length of the  
Yang Chou road,<sup>1</sup>  
When they roll up their beaded blinds there is none to be  
compared with her.

*Part II*

She has so much passion, yet (to-night) it would seem as if  
she had none.  
Although we are drinking for the last time she fails to force a  
smile.<sup>2</sup>  
But the wax candles seem to understand and sorrow at our  
parting ;  
They deputize for us and they weep till early dawn.

*A Traveller's Song*

*by MÊNG CHIAO*

THE tender mother takes up needle and thread  
To mend the clothes of her son who goes away ;  
She stitches closely and takes her time,  
For she fears her son will be long in returning.  
Who can say if the heart of one blade of grass  
Can repay the rich sunshine of spring ?<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This district was famous for its courtesans, especially in the Sui dynasty.

<sup>2</sup> At the parting-cup one should attempt to hide one's grief. But for all her brave attempts she cannot smile.

<sup>3</sup> See Fletcher, *More Gems of Chinese Poetry*, p. 183. i.e. Can a son's affection ever equal a mother's love ?

# *Banishing Thoughts of Grief*<sup>1</sup>

by YÜAN CHÊN

## *Part I*

THE youngest and most loved daughter of Mr. Hsieh,  
From the hour she married Chien Lou,<sup>2</sup> was clever and  
cunning in a hundred ways.

When she saw I had no clothes she would ransack her wicker  
basket<sup>3</sup>;

When I coaxed her to buy wine she took out her golden  
hairpin.

Wild vegetables filled our bowls and she was willing to eat  
husks.

The falling leaves she used for fuel and would look up the old  
locust tree.<sup>4</sup>

Now that I have ample means from my salary, all that I can  
do is to sacrifice to you,

And fasting in penance say a mass for your soul.

## *Part II*

Formerly in jesting words we talked of the life after death,  
To-day this very issue is before my eyes.

Your clothes have all been given away,

<sup>1</sup> Fletcher, *More Gems*, pp. 191-193.

<sup>2</sup> A Taoist worthy who was so poor, when he died, that there were no clothes to bury him in. He wrote four books on Taoism. The author refers to himself here as Chien Lou in order to emphasize his own poverty. Giles, *Biog. Dict.*, p. 363.

<sup>3</sup> This may mean either she was a good needlewoman or possibly that she sold her own clothes from her marriage trousseau, which came in a wicker basket, in order to provide him with a wardrobe.

<sup>4</sup> i.e. to see if there were any leaves likely to fall.

Your needlework is still preserved, but I do not dare to spread it out.

Because of old associations <sup>1</sup> I am kind to the slave girls. I have already met you in my dreams and have sent you money.<sup>2</sup>

I know that my grief is the common lot of all,  
But because we were poor and mean as husband and wife,  
I grieve over a thousand things.

### *Part III*

In my idle moments I sit pitying you and grieving for myself.

Of my life how much is left to me?

Têng Yu <sup>3</sup> had no children and calmly accepted his fate.<sup>4</sup>

P'an Yüeh <sup>5</sup> mourned his wife and wrote to her in vain.

In the same grave's dark vault, what can we hope for?

It is still hard to foresee a union in another life;

<sup>1</sup> i.e. remembering they used to serve you.

<sup>2</sup> Not to be confused with the paper money scattered to "buy the road" at a funeral in order to please the devils, but the money burnt at the tomb. The Chinese combine a sceptical attitude to life after death with sacrifice to their ancestors. But ancestor worship is as important for the future of the family as the past.

<sup>3</sup> Têng Yu, who lived in the Chin dynasty, fled from bandits with his wife, son and nephew. He had to abandon one of his children to escape and decided to abandon his own son: because he was still young and might have another, but his brother was dead. He never had another son, but was much commended for his behaviour. He would be a lonely ghost.

<sup>4</sup> P'an Yüeh, also of the Chin dynasty, wrote three poems entitled "Mourning for the dead."

<sup>5</sup> "Never ceased to realize his fate" or "was never left in doubt of heaven's will."

I lie awake the whole night with my eyes open  
Wishing I could repay you for your past devotion,  
But your eyes are fast closed.<sup>1</sup>

*The Beautiful Woman*

by TU FU

I, WHO was the flower of my day among the beauties,  
Now dwell alone in a deserted valley ;  
I, who was well born,  
Live desolate in a country retreat.  
In past times there was ruin and turmoil in the frontier  
passes ;  
My brothers met with destruction ;  
What availed such high officials their lofty rank  
When they could not protect their own flesh and blood ?  
It is the way of the world to turn in loathing from adversity  
and decay.  
The affairs of men flicker like a guttering candle.  
My husband holds me in light esteem,<sup>2</sup>  
But his new mistress seems as beautiful as jade.  
Even the morning glory has its passing hour.<sup>3</sup>  
The Mandarin duck and drake<sup>4</sup> do not roost apart,  
But wrapt in his new favourite's smiles

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps a poetical conceit and a forced antithesis between his own never-closing eyes and her eyes which in this life always closed in pain, and are now closed in death.

<sup>2</sup> An alternative translation : " My husband is flighty and fickle."

<sup>3</sup> Even the convolvulus which opens at morning to die at night has its hour of sunshine. Giles gives " magnolia."

<sup>4</sup> Symbols of conjugal faithfulness.

How can he hear his old love's sighs ?  
In the hills the spring water runs clear,  
But on leaving the hills it becomes muddy.  
My servant girl sells my pearls and returns  
To pull the creepers to patch my thatched roof.  
Her mistress plucks flowers, but not to stick in her hair ;  
The cypress needles slide through her listless fingers.  
The weather is cold and my kingfisher-blue sleeves are thin ;  
As day draws to dusk I lean against the tall bamboos (thinking  
of other days).

*Autumn Evening*

by TU MU

ON this autumn evening the white candle light shines coldly  
on the painted screen  
As she strikes the passing fireflies with her gossamer fan.  
The colour of the steps of the courtyard at night is like cold  
water,  
And she sits watching the Herdboy dally with the Spinning  
Maiden.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Herdsman is identified with three stars in the constellation of Aquila, the Spinning Maiden with Vega. Their festival occurs on the 7th day of the 7th month ; throughout the year these two are parted but on this night alone the magpies make a bridge across the Milky Way and the hopeless lovers meet. In this poem it does not seem to be the 7th day of the 7th month, and the idea of their frustration is more pregnant than to assume that the Herdsman is having his annual reunion.

## *Songs of the Four Seasons*

by LI PO

### *(I) Spring*

In the Ch'in country lives Miss Lo Fu ;  
She plucks mulberry leaves beside green waters,  
Her white hand stretches out to touch the green leaves,  
Her make-up is freshly put on.  
"My silkworms are starving," she says, "I must be off."  
Do not halt your five horses to linger here.

### *(II) Summer*

On the Mirror Lake three hundred *li* broad  
The tender shoots of the lotus put forth their flowers.  
In the 5th month Hsi Shih comes to pluck them.  
Men come to gaze on the narrow Yo Yeh.<sup>1</sup>  
When she rows home she does not wait for the moon,  
For she must get back to the King of Yüeh.

### *(III) Autumn*<sup>2</sup>

At Ch'ang An there is a thin slip of a moon,  
The sound of beating clothes rises from a thousand families,  
The autumn wind blows without stopping

<sup>1</sup> A tributary stream flowing into the Mirror Lake, in Chekiang, the old kingdom of Wu. Point of "narrow" is an antithesis to "300 *li* broad." Why didn't people prefer to gaze at the splendid broad expanse of the lake? Because it was through the narrow tributary that Hsi Shih had to pass on her way to pluck the flowers.

<sup>2</sup> See Fletcher, *Gems of Chinese Verse*, p. 8 ; Obata, p. 149.

Right from the jade door pass.<sup>1</sup>  
Ah! When will the Tartars suffer defeat  
And my good man return from the distant battlefields?

(IV) *Winter*

To-morrow morning the post leaves (for the frontier);  
The whole night we stuff and pack the uniforms<sup>2</sup>;  
Tender hands ply the needle until they are numb with cold.  
How can we wield the scissors any longer?  
When finished the clothing has to be sent to a far distance:  
How many days will it take to reach Lintao?

*Spring Thoughts*<sup>3</sup>

by LI PO

THE grasses of Yen<sup>4</sup> are as tender as green silk,  
The mulberries of Chin<sup>5</sup> bow beneath their leaves.  
Now when your thoughts are turning to home  
My longing heart is already breaking.  
The spring wind is no friend of mine.  
How does it dare enter my gauze curtains?

<sup>1</sup> Yu Mên Kuan at Chia Yü Kuan, on the north-west frontier of Kansu. This is the gate to China and to trade and political expansion in Central Asia. The Chinese, ever since their occupation 2,000 years ago of these lands of passage, struggled to hold a pass whose possession was indispensable against Wu-sun, Yüeh Chih, Hsiang-nu, Tartars, Tangut and Mongol.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. put in wadding of silk-waste.

<sup>3</sup> A woman in the south awaits her husband absent in the north. As the northern grasses begin to put forth their shoots the husband's thoughts should turn towards home where the mulberry trees are already bearing foliage and the waiting wife cannot contain her longing.

<sup>4</sup> Chihli.

<sup>5</sup> Shansi.

*Spring Bitterness*

by LIU FANG-P'ING

At the gauze window the sun sets and the day draws  
gradually to its close.

In the Golden Room<sup>1</sup> there is no one to see the ravages of  
her tears.

Dull and quiet is the empty pavilion at the end of the  
spring,

Pear blossom covers the ground, but no one opens the  
door.<sup>2</sup>

[No Title]

by LI SHANG-YIN

*Part I. The Man*

IN how many folds of scented gauze patterned with phoenix  
tails is the round jade top of your awning enclosed  
for the night?

(Though) you have a fan like a full moon, yet your blushes  
find it hard to hide behind it.

The carts rumble by to a sound like thunder and so my  
words cannot reach you.

Otherwise it is quiet and still and the golden lamp has burnt  
low.

<sup>1</sup> The Golden Room is a reference to Han Wu Ti, who, when asked as a boy whether he liked a certain princess, said, "If I could get hold of her, I would keep her in a golden room." It shows the exalted position of the lady, i.e. she must be in the palace.

<sup>2</sup> Presumably the door to the Emperor's apartments. Youth is dropping away like the pear blossom, with no one to see it.



There is no word that can pass from where you are to where  
I am, where the pomegranate flowers are red.<sup>1</sup>  
The dappled horse is tethered to the weeping willow on the  
bank  
Whither in the south west could we go trusting to a favourable  
wind?

*Part II. The Woman*<sup>2</sup>

Up here behind fold upon fold of curtains is my Mo Chou  
Hall<sup>3</sup>

After a long night the early dawn creeps slowly along.  
It was in a dream that the fairy girl lived on the banks (of  
a river).<sup>4</sup>

The small maiden who lived by the bridge after all (managed  
to) live without a husband.<sup>5</sup>

The wind and waves do not realize how weak are the stems  
of the water chestnut.

<sup>1</sup> He is probably serenading her from the garden and he would like to elope with her.

<sup>2</sup> In the second half of the poem the maiden is trying to console herself with precedents for her virginity, but the undercurrent is one of passion.

<sup>3</sup> Lit. "Hill of not grieving." There were two famous beauties by name of Mo Chou, one from Shih Chêng and the other from Loyang. "Where is Mo Chou? Mo Chou is west of Szechwan. "You boatmen pull in your two oars and hasten to fetch her to me." Liang Wu Ti wrote a poem about the other.

<sup>4</sup> King Hsiang of Ch'u dreamt that he had relations with a fairy lady on the banks of a Lake near Po Yang, but he awoke and found it a dream.

<sup>5</sup> An old ballad speaks of a girl that lived by a bridge at the water-side and was unable to marry.

Is it the moon or the dew which teaches the cassia leaves their  
scent?

I know that the thoughts of love have no reality in them  
And yet I cannot save myself from the grief of desire.

*Spring Grief*

by CHIN CH'ANG HSÜ

DRIVE away the yellow orioles,  
Do not let them perch and sing on the bough (outside my  
window),<sup>1</sup>  
For their singing disturbs my dreams  
And I cannot go to Liao Hsi.<sup>2</sup>

*A Palace Composition*<sup>3</sup>

by HSÜEH FÊNG

IN the twelve towers her early morning toilet is completed.  
From the tower "of looking for fairies" she gazes towards  
the Emperor's (apartments).  
On the palace gate the locks bite on their golden beasts and  
the linked rings are cold.  
The water drips from the copper dragon.  
When will the water clock bring in the day?  
Her cloudy hair combed, she looks at the mirror,  
She changes her silk clothes, puts on more perfume.  
(At last) from a distance she spies on the front hall of the  
emperor and sees the curtains drawn.  
The attendants in their uniforms are making the imperial bed.

<sup>1</sup> The lady does not want to be deflected from loyalty to her husband.

<sup>2</sup> Manchuria, where her husband is on distant active service.

<sup>3</sup> This poem describes the tedium of one of the imperial concubines  
waiting in vain for the imperial favours.

## *The Poor Woman*

by CH'IN T'AO-YU

(BROUGHT up) in a thatched cottage, what does she know of  
the scented pleasures of gauze and openwork silk?  
She who would love to have employed a good go-between  
and is sick at heart (because she cannot afford it).<sup>1</sup>  
Who is she to hope for the love of gay young sparks and the  
young men about town?  
She, like the rest of us, lives in hard times and has to be  
economical in the whims of the toilet.  
What is the use of her venturing to boast of her skilled  
needle,  
When she cannot make up her eyebrows with the others and  
paint them long?  
Bitterly year after year she presses out the gold embroidery  
And on behalf of other girls makes bridal clothes.

## *A Palace Song*

by PO CHÜ-I

HER tears are spent in her silken handkerchief,  
Yet dreams will not come.  
In the depths of the night from the front of the palace comes  
the sound of songs to music.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps "she thinks of employing a go-between but her heart sinks, because she knows she has no chance with eligible young men; so she thinks, who would [be such a fool as to] fall in love with an accomplished and versatile young man."

<sup>2</sup> i.e. The revels of others, whose company has been preferred to hers.

She is still pretty and young, yet the (Imperial) favour has  
been withdrawn before (withering beauty justified it).  
Leaning aslant on her wicker-framed brazier <sup>1</sup> she sits till  
dawn.

*The Gold Threaded Coat* <sup>2</sup>

by TU CH'IU-NIANG

COVER not the gold-threaded coat,  
Grasp the years when you are young,  
When the flowers open come pluck them ;  
Do not wait to gather a spent spray from an empty bough.

<sup>1</sup> Lit. "Steam cage." This was not a pillow or an incense burner, but a contrivance properly used for drying clothes, and also used to give warmth to the room.

<sup>2</sup> The "moral" of this poem is Herrick's "Gather ye rose-buds while ye may." *More Gems*, p. 194.

#### IV

### PAINTING, MUSIC AND DANCING

*Listening to Mr. Tung Tai playing on the Tartar Flageolet  
and sending word to Mr. Fang, the Court Chamberlain*<sup>1</sup>

by LI CH'I

OF ancient times the Lady Ts'ai composed an air for the  
Tartar flageolet.

It was a melody in eighteen bars.

The Tartars wept so that their tears moistened the wayside  
grasses ;

The Chinese envoy groaned as he turned towards his parting  
guests,

(For the music spoke) of ancient battlefields now green  
And of beacon fires long cold of the Ta Huang steppes dreary  
with driven snows.

Now (Mr. Tung) touches the *shang* chord,<sup>2</sup> afterwards the  
*chüeh* and the *yü*,

(And his audience) is startled on all sides  
By the whisper of autumn leaves.

Ah ! Mister Tung, you are inspired.

Under the dark shade of the firs the supernatural world  
steals to listen.

<sup>1</sup> Giles has "Supervising Censor."

<sup>2</sup> Possibly the stop of a wind instrument.

The notes first slow, then fast respond to your touch ;  
They come and go instinct with passion,  
As when o'er the empty hills the birds scatter to return in  
flocks,  
Or as when o'er ten thousand *li* the clouds float now dark,  
now light,  
(You reproduce in turn) the notes of the fledgeling wild goose  
that has lost its flock in the night  
(Or the cry) of the starved Tartar child yearning for his  
mother's breasts.  
(At your touch) the river stills her waves  
While the birds cease their cries  
And the Wu-Chu tribes think of their distant homeland  
As a wail of sorrow rises from the sands and dust of Tibet.  
Then the sad air changes suddenly to gust and storm,  
As when wind blows through the trees or rain dashes down  
on the tiles,  
Or the springs shoot forth in spray above the heads of the  
trees,  
Or the wild deer bellow as they run below the lodge.  
At Ch'ang An next to the east wall near the palace  
Where the phoenix lake faces the gate of azure gems  
Lives a scholar<sup>1</sup> who despises fame and riches.  
Morning and evening he longs to see you (Mr. Tung Tai)  
visit him  
Carrying your flageolet.

<sup>1</sup> i.e. Fang, the censor.

*At the House of the Official Wei Fêng looking at the  
Paintings of Horses painted by General Ts'ao*

by TU FU

At the beginning of the dynasty among those that painted  
saddle horses

There were none that counted as an inspired artist but Prince  
Chiang Tu<sup>1</sup>;

But in the last thirty years it was the General's forms which  
eclipsed all others.

Men saw again the real yellow horse depicted

When in times past he copied the former Emperor's<sup>2</sup> steed  
"White in the Bright Evening."

For ten days thunder and lightning played over the dragon  
pool;

Within the palace there was a deep cornelian bowl,

The concubines of third and those of the fifth rank pass the  
order to their juniors to fetch it.

The cornelian bowl is bestowed upon the General and he  
gives thanks, dances, and returns home.

Light gauzes and fine silks<sup>3</sup> rained upon him in one continuous  
stream

<sup>1</sup> Prince Ning (eldest son of T'ai Tsung, 710-713), who painted excellent pictures of horses. Some time early in the eighth century he painted the walls of a pavilion at Court with a representation of six horses in a dust storm. We are told the Emperor Hsüan Tsung greatly admired their fine heads and dappled coats. "Every detail was perfect and their long wind-tossed cloud-like manes were extraordinarily realistic; when one of the horses was missing it was believed that some spirit had mysteriously transformed it into a real horse."

<sup>2</sup> Emperor Hsüan Tsung.

<sup>3</sup> This refers either to the fine silks pressed upon him to get home to paint on them, or those given him in payment for his pictures.

When the royal houses and the noble families secure his  
calligraphy.

For the first time they perceive their screens bathed in  
radiance.

Of ancient times T'ai Tsung<sup>1</sup> possessed a curly-haired horse  
And of recent times the family of Kuo<sup>2</sup> possessed a piebald  
steed ;

To-day there is a new picture of these two horses.

When connoisseurs see it they sigh (with pleasure).

These two are war horses (capable of striving) each one  
against ten thousand.

(Behind them) the white silk stretches far away in wind and  
sand.

The other seven horses (are also painted with consummate  
skill),

There are cold mists beyond them, they move as in an  
atmosphere of sleet and snow<sup>3</sup> ;

Their frosty hooves beat the ground amidst the long avenues  
of catalpa trees.

The officials and the grooms that tend the stables stand in rows.  
How it stirs the soul (to see) nine such horses striving for  
mastery :

Their glance is clear and noble,

Their poise effortless and eager-spirited.

May I ask you who has keen enough perception to appreciate  
these ?

<sup>1</sup> Second Emperor of the T'ang dynasty, grandfather of Hsüan Tsung.

<sup>2</sup> General Kuo Tzū-yi.

<sup>3</sup> One interpretation takes this line to refer to the colours of the horse  
"red mixed with white" against an impression of distance—"There  
afar off, as it were in a mingling of red mist and white snow in the  
cold air."



To-day there is Wei Pêng,<sup>1</sup> yesterday there was Chih Tun,<sup>2</sup>  
Recalling the former imperial procession at the Hsin Fêng  
Palace.

It seemed as if their streamers of kingfisher feathers almost  
touched the skies as the cavalcade moved east,  
Caracoling and curveting, thirty thousand horses, all with the  
bone and sinews you see in this picture.  
Since the days when the emperors offered the river ancestors  
precious treasures<sup>3</sup>

No more is there a shooting the dragons in the waters of the  
Yangtze.

See you not that to-day from among the pine and cypress  
before the hall of the "Golden Maize"

The dragon horses have all disappeared,  
And there is only the note of the bird whistling in the wind.

*On seeing the Pupil of Kung Sun dance the Sword Dance*  
by TU FU

(On the 19th day of the 10th month of the 2nd year of Ta Li  
I saw in the house Yüan Ch'ih, an official of Kuei Chou,<sup>4</sup> a  
girl named Li from Lin-ying<sup>5</sup> dance a sword dance. I  
admired her skill and asked her who had taught her. She  
said the lady Kung Sun. I remembered that in the third year  
of K'ai Yüan at Yen-ch'êng,<sup>6</sup> when I was a small boy I had  
seen lady Kung Sun dance. She was the only one in the

<sup>1</sup> A court secretary who was a painter.

<sup>2</sup> A horse painter of the Chin dynasty.

<sup>3</sup> ? reference to sacrifice of horses to the Gods of the River.

<sup>4</sup> Kiangsu.

<sup>5</sup> Honan.

Imperial theatre who could dance this dance. Now she is aged and unknown and even her pupils have passed the heyday of their beauty. I wrote the poem to express my sorrow. The work of Chang Hsi<sup>1</sup> of the Wu<sup>2</sup> district, the great master of grass writing, was improved by his having been present when the lady Kung Sun danced in the Yeh<sup>3</sup> district. From this may be judged the art of Kung Sun.)

Of old times there was a beautiful courtesan Kung Sun,  
When she danced the sword dance everyone was moved ;  
Those who saw her were massed like the hills tense with  
emotion ;

Heaven and earth swayed in sympathy up and down.  
For she flashed like the arrow with which the archer Yi<sup>4</sup> shot  
down the nine suns

And soared as a crowd of spirit kings astride their wingéd  
dragons.

She began like a thunder clap with all the anger of rolling  
echoes,

She finished like the waters of the Yangtze shining calm and  
still on a summer day.

Her red lips, her pearl sleeves are things of the past,  
But in the evening (of her life) there was a pupil to carry on  
her fragrant traditions.

When the beautiful dancer of Lin-ying, now (her successor),  
danced in Po Ti<sup>5</sup> Palace

She danced wonderfully to the music and her skill triumphed.

<sup>1</sup> T'ang calligraphist.

<sup>2</sup> Kiangsu.

<sup>3</sup> Honan.

<sup>4</sup> A famous archer in Chinese mythology who shot nine suns down from the sky and became King of the tenth ; his wife, Ch'ang-o, became queen of the moon.

<sup>5</sup> Szechwan.

When I talked with her we found a common background of memory.

Overcome by memories the episode was coloured with an added poignancy.

Ming Huang possessed over eighty such girls, of whom Kung Sun excelled all as a sword dancer.

The passage of fifty years is gone as the turn of the hand,  
Wind and dust in continuous storms <sup>1</sup> have darkened the Imperial palaces,

The children of the pear garden <sup>2</sup> have drifted away like smoke,

The remnant of that galaxy of beauty (look forward) to the bright cold of a winter's day.

The trees already meet to the south of the tomb of Ming Huang.

On the stone walls of Ch'ü T'ang <sup>3</sup> the grasses rattle in the wind.

(To-night) as this splendid feast, as the song of the tortoise-shell flute and the pipes drew to its close,

At the very moment of my ecstasy came sadness ; while the moon comes out in the east

An old man like myself does not know where to go.

With blistered feet I stumble among the wild hills, yet I regret my haste.

<sup>1</sup> Reference to the successive Turfan invasions, and the rebellion of An Lu-shan which distressed the close of Ming Huang's reign.

<sup>2</sup> A school of acting and music.

<sup>3</sup> Szechwan.

*Song to the Lute*

by LI CH'I

THE host to-night brings wine and we make merry together  
And he invites a guest from Kwang Ling to play to us on the  
flute.

The moon shines forth on the city walls where a few crows  
have not gone to roost.

The hoar frost freezes a thousand trees,  
The wind blows through our clothes,  
But the bronze stove glows and the flickering candles give  
added light.

To begin with, he plays the "Waters of Lu,"  
Afterwards it is the "The Princess of Chu."

As the music strikes up all else is silent.  
From the corners of the room there is no murmur,  
While the stars above fade.

I have come all these thousand miles to Ch'êng Huai<sup>1</sup> on  
official appointment,  
But now my resolve to return to my native land first takes  
shape.

*A Ballad of Painting addressed to General T'sao Pa*

by TU FU

GENERAL, although you are descended from King Wu of  
Wei,<sup>2</sup>

To-day you have come down in the world,

<sup>1</sup> Szechwan.

<sup>2</sup> T'sao Ts'ao, the famous general of the novel of the "Three Kingdoms," was known as Wei Wu.

Yet you are still of high descent.  
 The kingdom-carving hero <sup>1</sup> has passed away,  
 But his culture and learning live on in you.  
 When you first studied calligraphy you were a follower of  
 the lady of Wei,<sup>2</sup>  
 But to your disappointment you could not surpass Wang Hsi  
 Chih.<sup>3</sup>  
 The artist does not know when old age arrives.  
 Wealth and honours are to you like the floating clouds.  
 In the years of K'ai Yüan <sup>4</sup> you were seen at court;  
 The imperial benevolence often required your presence at the  
 hall of the southern fragrance.  
 In the Mounting Cloud pavilion the portraits of meritorious  
 officials had become faded <sup>5</sup>;  
 You set to work to give them new life,  
 You portrayed the worthy ministers with official caps.  
 Fierce generals with big feathered arrows at their waists.  
 The very hair on the faces of Pao Kung <sup>6</sup> and O Kung <sup>6</sup>  
 seemed to be moving;

<sup>1</sup> i.e. Ts'ao Ts'ao.

<sup>2</sup> Died A.D. 349, teacher of Wang Hsi Chih, the famous calligraphist.

<sup>3</sup> A.D. 321-379. In his youth a diligent student of the classics. He rose to be a Brigadier-General. He is said to have been the greatest calligrapher China ever produced and to have invented the clerkly style. His script is described as light as the floating clouds, vigorous as a startled dragon. On one occasion he is said to have made a copy of the Tao Tê Ching for a Taoist monk in exchange for a flock of geese. One of his chief delights was to play with his grandchildren, whom he used to carry about and "stuff with sweets."

<sup>4</sup> A.D. 713-742.

<sup>5</sup> There were supposed to have been twenty-four of these portraits, painted a century earlier in the Chêng-kuan period, A.D. 627-650.

<sup>6</sup> Two great generals who helped to found the T'ang dynasty.

Their heroic mien vivid as in the days of their lust for battle.  
The late emperor possessed a jade-coloured horse ;  
A whole army of painters painted it from different points of  
view.<sup>1</sup>

One day it was led to the steps of the red terrace and stood  
poised in the imperial gateway like (the spirit of) a  
rushing mighty wind.

At the Emperor's command you threw open a roll of blank  
silk,

Your thoughts and skill were bent on the task before you ;  
In the twinkling of an eye there came forth a true dragon  
(horse) of the Nine Heavens.

In one wash ten thousand other pictures of horses paled into  
insignificance.

The jade flower steed (you painted) is hung above the  
imperial couch.

On his verandah before the imperial couch the two horses  
(model and painting) face one another.<sup>2</sup>

His Majesty smiles delightedly and hastens to bestow gold  
upon you ;

Grooms and stablemen alike are dumfounded.

Your pupil Han Kan <sup>3</sup> became famous early in the painting  
of horses and exhausted every special feature,

But even he was only able to paint the flesh and not the bones,  
And his paintings of splendid steeds lacked the breath of life.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Alternative translation : " A whole army of painters painted it  
but did not get it right ! "

<sup>2</sup> Alternative translation : " One hung above the couch, the other  
(standing) before the courtyard ; stupendous. "

<sup>3</sup> A painter of horses flourished c. 720-760.

<sup>4</sup> Lit. " And was so insensitive as to allow the spirit of these noble  
steeds to wilt and perish. "

The excellence of your painting, General, lies in its spirit.  
You would also paint scholars if they came your way,  
But to-day, adrift on the surface of these troubled times,  
You are forced to paint even the men of the street.  
Your road to advancement is closed and the world looks  
coldly on you.

No one in the world has ever been as poor as you,  
But from old times till to-day those whose fame has been high  
have in the evening of their days  
Fallen on evil times and their lives have been crumpled.

V

OFFICIAL DUTY IN THE PALACE

*Sent to Tu Fu at the Tsô Sheng*<sup>1</sup>

by TS'ÊN TS'AN

TOGETHER we mounted the vermillion steps,<sup>2</sup>  
 Each in our different grades and limited by the purple *wei*.<sup>3</sup>  
 In the morning we followed the maces of office (into the  
 Palace) ;  
 In the evening we came home permeated by the imperial  
 incense.  
 Now, white-haired, I lament the falling of the flowers,<sup>4</sup>  
 But I watch you with pride soaring like a bird in the azure  
 skies,  
 And as the holy court is without fault or flaw, so I find my  
 memorials are few and far between.

<sup>1</sup> A government department in which Tu Fu held office.

<sup>2</sup> Steps leading to the throne.

<sup>3</sup> Lagerstræmia—"Purple forbidden city"—a name for this plant, also called "the hundred days red" and "afraid of being tickled," planted in the Grand Secretariat.

<sup>4</sup> I am a back number.



*Harmonizing a Poem of the Court Official Chia Chih  
entitled "Morning Levée" at the Ta Ming Kung*

by WANG WEI

THE purple-capped cockman announces the dawn <sup>1</sup> ;  
The Master of the Robes brings in the imperial furs and the  
kingfisher blue garments ;  
The nine-fold gates <sup>2</sup> open to the audience hall of the palace ;  
The officials of a thousand countries bow to him who wears  
the many tasselled headdress <sup>3</sup> ;  
The light of the sun strikes upon the Taoist emblems <sup>4</sup> and  
makes them glitter ;  
The incense swirls round the writhing dragons of the  
(imperial robes) till they float in mist ;  
The audience over the duty remains of copying out the five  
coloured edict <sup>5</sup> ;  
Gems jingle returning home along the side of the phoenix  
pond.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The man who announces the break of day. He calls outside the "red bird gate" that the cock has crowed.

<sup>2</sup> Heaven supposed to have nine-fold gates so the palace must have the same.

<sup>3</sup> In ancient times the most important headdress. High at the back, low in front. On top like a mortar-board. Rectangular shape. Known as flat heaven cap. In front and behind tassels hang down to which pearls and jade are attached. The emperor had 12, Princes of blood 9, high court officials 7, less important 5. It went on till end of Ming.

<sup>4</sup> "Fairy palms" on bronze pillars, holding bowls to catch the dew.

<sup>5</sup> A reference to the duties of Chia Chih, who was a sort of private secretary.

<sup>6</sup> He returns by the inner precincts as befits a high official. Other officials attending the levée would pass outside on leaving.

*Sleeping a Spring Night in the Palace Annexe<sup>1</sup>*

by TU FU

THE flowers hide palace walls sunk in shadow,  
Birds chatter on their way to roost,  
The stars shine and twinkle into the ten thousand palace  
windows,  
The nine terraces of heaven lie lulled in the added brightness  
of the moon.  
Unable to sleep, I listen for the turning of the golden key in  
the lock  
Because of the wind I think I hear the jade ornaments a tinkle.  
To-morrow morning I have to report to the throne,  
So I keep wondering how much of the night has flown.

*A Poem with No Title<sup>2</sup>*

by LI SHANG-YIN

It seems only last night that the stars shone and the wind  
blew ;  
Your quarters were at the painted tower in the west,  
Mine in the pavilion of the cinnamon tree hall in the east,  
Alas, to-day, I am no coloured phoenix that can fly to you  
with double wings,

<sup>1</sup> The poet sleeps in the annexe of the palace, preparatory to making a report to the throne at the early morning audience.

<sup>2</sup> In the absence of a title it is generally assumed that the poem is a love song and that the writer was ashamed to title it, but this poem is more probably a memory of a past festive party among friends, which lasted until the official bells sounded for the morning audience, remembered by an official now in the provinces who sighs for the fleshpots of the capital. See *More Gems*, pp. 145, 146.

But my mind <sup>1</sup> is quick to apprehend spiritual affinity and can get through to you.

(On that evening) we sat opposite to each other and we amused ourselves with sending across the hook <sup>2</sup> while the spring wine was warm.

Each in our place we played "hitting the cover" <sup>3</sup> to the light of red candles <sup>4</sup>

Until, alas, I had to go, hearing the drum that called for the early morning audience.

Then I rode away home to the orchid tower <sup>5</sup>;

Now I am like the river weed that flows this way and that.

<sup>1</sup> "In my mind I am like a spiritual rhinoceros that rushes to heaven." Meaning of this uncertain. But certain spiritual qualities assigned to the horn of the rhinoceros, which points to heaven and makes it a spiritual beast. See Pao Poh-Tze. Giles translates this phrase, "His mind is very quick to apprehend every point."

<sup>2</sup> Probably some kind of "Up Jenkins." We read that Han Wu Ti played a game with a girl Ko Koh, who had a jade hook in her hands, but it may refer to the Chinese game of *ts'ai mui*, "guessing stuck up," in which the people sitting opposite simultaneously expose a number of fingers against the combined number that are shown them. Those who lose pay forfeit by a drink. This game is still played in the south at banquets and makes them a nightmare, for the guests become flushed and noisy. This game is played by the Italians, but by no other race in Europe. In Piedmont it is called *l'amouru*.

<sup>3</sup> "Hitting the cover," a literary man's game; probably something like consequences or acrostics.

<sup>4</sup> Red candles are used for festive occasions.

<sup>5</sup> The censor's *yamen*.

## VI

### SEPARATION AND EXILE

*Saying Farewell to the Assistant Magistrate Li, degraded in  
Official Service to Hsia Chung<sup>1</sup> and to Assistant Magistrate  
Wan demoted to Ch'ang Shan<sup>2</sup>*

by KAO SHIH

ALAS ! My friends, how do you feel about the parting ?  
Stay your horses ; empty one cup of wine and let me ask you  
about the places whither you are going.

In Wu Hsia<sup>1</sup> the howling of the monkeys will make the tears  
fall

From Hêng Yang<sup>2</sup> how many letters will the wild geese  
bring as they fly home ?

O'er the Green Maple River<sup>2</sup> in autumn (there is one)  
disappearing sail.

By the side of the " White Emperor City " <sup>3</sup> ancient trees are  
thinly scattered,

But the imperial favour in this hallowed age still sheds on us  
its refreshing dew,<sup>4</sup>

Temporarily you may have to say good bye, but don't hang  
back.

<sup>1</sup> Szechwan.

<sup>2</sup> Hunan.

<sup>3</sup> Szechwan.

<sup>4</sup> i.e. We must take up whatever burden the imperial pleasure imposes. In writing this he had to be careful not to say anything that could be interpreted as treason to the Emperor.

*Dreaming of Li Po*<sup>1</sup>

by TU FU

THE partings caused by death are swallowed in silence,  
But those among the living are a source of never-ending  
grief.

Alas ! From the malarial swamps south of Kiang-nan<sup>2</sup>  
The exile sends no news.

Ah ! my old friend, how I dream of you.

Clearly our long friendship is reflected in my mind,

Yet I fear lest your spirit should be among the ghosts.

Immeasurable is the distance that divides us,

Yet as your shade comes to me the maples turn green

And as it goes the mountain pass turns black,

But to-day you are (caught) in the (political) net

And the spirit is not your earthly shape, for are you not  
incalculably far away?<sup>3</sup>

The setting moon strikes the rafters of my home

And it still seems to light up your face.

The water is deep and the waves are wide ;

Do not allow the scaly dragon to get you.

The drifting clouds float by all day ;

The travelling friend goes far away and does not return.

For three nights running I dreamed of you

And in my love for you I knew your thoughts.

When you said farewell you had a hurried air,

The road was hard and your coming had not been easy.

<sup>1</sup> Li Po was banished in A.D. 758 because of his connection with Prince Lin.

<sup>2</sup> South of the Yangtze River.

<sup>3</sup> These two lines in some editions come before "Yet I fear lest your spirit," etc., etc.

Much wind ruffles the surfaces of the (Yangtze) river and  
the (Tung T'ing) lake.

I fear the paddles of your boat may be lost.

(In my dreams) I saw you come out of a doorway scratching  
your white head

As if you were betraying your life's purpose.

Here in the capital we are resplendent with official umbrellas  
and the regalia of office.

You alone are sad and distracted.

Truly, alas, the net has closed over you

And this old body of yours must bear with the meshes.

A fame that will last thousands of years

Is but a lonely mockery when life is past.<sup>1</sup>

### No Title

by LI SHANG-YIN

WHEN you said you were coming it was but empty words ;

Now that you have gone you have left no trace.

The moon shines aslant the roofs at the fifth watch ;

I dream that you have gone away for good ;

I cry out, but it is impossible to call you back.

I try to write to you, but such is my haste that the ink is not  
properly mixed.

On the top part of the cage the light of the wax lanterns  
reflects the gold kingfisher feathers.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Cineri gloria sera venit.*

<sup>2</sup> ? "The dim light of my candle shows up only half of the gold  
kingfisher feathers."

The musk perfume floats faintly through the embroidered  
hibiscus (curtains).

Liu<sup>1</sup> was sorry that Paradise was so far away,  
But I am still more troubled for I am much further away  
than he.

The east wind comes in gusts, bringing soft drops of rain ;  
Beyond the hibiscus pond there is faint thunder.<sup>2</sup>

The gold toad<sup>3</sup> bites on the lock and the incense comes  
through ;

The jade tiger<sup>4</sup> pulls at the rope and the water is drawn up  
from the well.

The lady Chia<sup>5</sup> spied through the screen on the charms of  
young secretary Han ;

The lady Mi<sup>6</sup> left a pillow for the prince of Wêi,

<sup>1</sup> Liu Chan, a Rip van Winkle of the Han dynasty, who went to the T'ien T'ai Monastery to look for herbs and fell in with some spirits of the mountains with which he dallied. When he returned he found he had missed seven generations.

<sup>2</sup> Of a coming storm and not of wheels.

<sup>3</sup> The lock of a Chinese box often in the form of a toad because the creature was supposed to be able to hold its breath interminably and so can bite and hold on and need never relax its grip. Put on a box as symbol that it cannot be opened. Fragrance comes through, i.e. she is buried deep, but her perfume escapes. The text says " comes in," apparently penetrates the locked door from outside.

<sup>4</sup> Well rope either had a jade tiger clasp fastened at a certain point of the rope, so by the position of it you could gauge the depth of the water, or perhaps the tiger was carved on the parapet.

<sup>5</sup> The lady Chia who flirted with her father's secretary. One morning her father smelt her scent on his clothes ; and then permitted the marriage.

<sup>6</sup> The fairy of the River Lo. A woman who had been drowned and became a water fairy, who visited the Prince of Wêi in a dream, and left her pillow behind.

But the human heart in spring cannot hope to vie with the  
flowers,  
For every surge of heart there is a pinch of ashes.

*No Title*

*by* LI SHANG-YIN

WHEN we were able to meet it was hard enough and now we  
are parted for ever it is harder still ;  
The east wind <sup>1</sup> has died down, and the hundred flowers have  
faded.  
The silkworm of spring spins its silk up to the moment of its  
death <sup>2</sup> ;  
The wax candle is burnt down to the end and only then are  
its tears dry.  
In the morning I gaze into my mirror and grieve that my  
room locks must change ;  
In the evening the bright cold moon calls forth my sad songs,  
(Yet after all) it is only a short road from here to paradise.  
Will not the blue bird be indulgent and allow <sup>3</sup> me to steal  
a glance.

*Lines written to Mr. Secretary Yüan on setting forth on  
the Yangtze*

*by* WEI YING-WU

SADLY, sadly, I leave those who are near and dear ;  
Lightly I am borne away into the mists.

<sup>1</sup> The difficulties that have kept us apart in the past have disappeared,  
but love is now extinguished. The end of the east wind means the  
passing of spring and the consequent fading of flowers.

<sup>2</sup> The silkworm cocoon. Everything has its day.

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps act as a scout for me.



As I am poled home to Loyang<sup>1</sup>  
The echoes of a bell drift through the forests of Kwang Ling.<sup>2</sup>  
This morning there was a sad parting,  
Where shall we meet again?  
The affairs of the world are like a boat caught in a current,  
And borne away into the stream.  
How can there be any permanence?

*A Farewell*<sup>3</sup>

by WANG WEI

I DISMOUNT from my horse and drink your wine.  
I ask you where you are going.  
You say you are tired of life.  
That you go to lie on the slopes of the Southern Hills  
And I feel I need ply you with no more questions.  
The white clouds that float endlessly by there (will separate  
you from the world of men).

*Unfulfilled Desire*<sup>4</sup>

by LI PO

*Part I (Sung by the Man)*

(I FEEL) dim and wistful yearnings to be in Ch'ang An<sup>5</sup>  
In autumn when the crickets sing by the parapet of the golden  
well

<sup>1</sup> In Honan, a former capital.

<sup>2</sup> Hupeh.

<sup>3</sup> See Fletcher, *Gems of Chinese Verse*, p. 130.

<sup>4</sup> See Fletcher, *More Gems of Chinese Poetry*, pp. 34-36.

<sup>5</sup> She was in Ch'ang An, the T'ang capital. He was at Yen-jan, a lonely mountain town in Szechwan.

And the light frost makes one shiver and the bamboo mats  
are cold.

By the flickering flames of a solitary lamp my thoughts are  
like to die away.

I roll up the screen and gaze at the moon

In the empty sky with many a vain long sigh

For my flowerlike beauty who is parted from me by the  
clouds.

Above is the dark obscurity of heaven unfathomable.

Below the waves of the green water dash and tumble.

Heaven is high and the earth wide.

My thoughts fly on their bitter journey.

But my dream soul cannot reach its goal for the banner pass  
is too hard (to penetrate).

Endless longing breaks my heart.

*Part II (An answer by the Woman)*

The sun's colours fade, the flowers are covered with mist,  
The moon shines pale, I am sad and anxious and unable to  
sleep.

I put down the Chao flute on its phoenix holder.<sup>1</sup>

And I take the Shu lute and begin to sound its mandarin duck  
strings.<sup>2</sup>

My song has a meaning but there is no one to hear it;  
Would that it could follow the spring wind to the Yen-jan<sup>3</sup>  
mountains.

<sup>1</sup> Or "the notes of the Chao lute have sunk to rest on its phoenix bridge."

<sup>2</sup> Possibly the strings of the lute were fastened by pegs in the form of ducks.

<sup>3</sup> On the boundaries between China and Manchuria.

I think of you so far away beyond the blue sky.  
Of old times my eyes that sparkled are now full of tears.  
Oh ! if you doubt this aching of my heart  
Here in my bright mirror come back and look at me.

*Thoughts on Chinese New Year*

by TS'UI T'U

HERE am I far off on the "Three Pa" road <sup>1</sup>  
Tethered to a body and exiled in a dangerous country  
a thousand leagues away.  
This evening I am surrounded by wild mountain ranges  
covered with lingering snows ;  
I sit by a lonely candle in the company of strangers.  
Gradually I feel more distant from my friends,  
Gradually I draw nearer to my servants.  
How can I bear to float about tied up but aimless ?  
To-morrow the new year comes.<sup>2</sup>

*On parting with Han Shên at the Yün-yang<sup>3</sup> Rest House*

by SSŪ-K'UNG SHU

As old friends we were separated by the Yangtze River.  
For several years we were divided by hills and streams ;  
Suddenly I see you and my thoughts are confused and I think  
it is a dream ;  
Together we grieve that we have been parted so long and ask  
each other a thousand trifling things.

<sup>1</sup> A dangerous road in western Szechwan.

<sup>2</sup> Another year wasted ; or rather perhaps he is chafing at the inaction with which he must face all the promise of the new year.

<sup>3</sup> Shensi.

A single lamp shines through the winter rain,  
The deep bamboos are obscured by the floating mists.  
How we dread the breaking of the dawn.  
Before we leave our camp the parting cup is lovingly passed  
from hand to hand.

*Thoughts on the Chill of Early Autumn*

by MÊNG HAO-JAN

THE trees are bare, the wild geese have flown to the south,  
The north wind is cold upon the river.  
My home is by the winding waters of Hsiang Yang <sup>1</sup>  
Far distant from the clouds of Ch'u.<sup>2</sup>  
I have had my fill of homesick tears in the land of strangers ;  
I see a lonely sail upon the horizon and would like to follow it.  
Lost at the ford, I wish to ask the way,  
But there is only the vast level expanse of water and the night  
coming down.

*At the Hibiscus Tower saying Farewell to Hsin Chien*

by WANG CH'ANG-LING

THE cold rain was all over the river and night had fallen as  
I entered Wu,<sup>3</sup>  
With to-day's dawn I bid farewell to my friends, for I go to  
• where the mountains of Ch'u stand isolated against the  
sky.  
If my friends at Loyang ask after me,  
Tell them my heart is still a slice of ice in a jade bottle.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hunan.

<sup>2</sup> South of the Tung T'ing lake.

<sup>3</sup> Kiangsu.

<sup>4</sup> i.e. I am still uncorrupted in spite of the disappointments of official life. "Clear as ice and pure as jade."

*A Farewell at the Chin Ling<sup>1</sup> Wine Shop<sup>2</sup>*

by LI PO

THE breeze blows the willow catkins filling the inn with their fragrance.

The barmaid from Wu<sup>3</sup> presses wine upon the guests and urges them to drink.

The young men of Chin Ling gather to speed the parting guest.

I am set for departure, but still linger, and so the goblets are drained.

May I ask you, Sirs, whether the windings of the east-flowing river

May be compared to our thoughts at parting ; which will outlast the other ?

*A Farewell to Ch'i Wu Ch'ien who has failed in his Examinations and is returning Home to the Country*

by WANG WEI

IN this golden age there are none that flee official life,  
Talent and intelligence show themselves at court ;  
And so it came about that you, a stranger from the Eastern hills,

Left your herb gathering (and came to court),  
On your arrival at the distant gold doors (of the capital),  
Who could say that your principles would not find employment ?

<sup>1</sup> Nanking.

<sup>3</sup> Kiangsu.

<sup>2</sup> See Fletcher, *Gems of Chinese Verse*, p. 11.

You came from the country of the Yangtze and the Huai <sup>1</sup>  
 at the time of the feast of the spring equinox,<sup>2</sup>  
 And in the capital you had to mend your spring clothes.  
 We pledge you with wine on the road from Ch'ang An.  
 A friend dear to my heart goes on his way.  
 You must now float away on your cinnamon boat.  
 Soon you will arrive at your country retreat.  
 The distant forests will lead you on your way.  
 (From afar) you will see this lonely city gleaming in the rays  
 of the setting sun.  
 Although I schemed and unhappily they failed to employ  
 you,<sup>3</sup>  
 Think not that your good qualities are entirely unappreciated.

*The Hut by the Mountain Stream*

by LIU TSUNG-YÜAN

FOR a long time I was bound by official cares,  
 Then suddenly I was banished to the far south,  
 To dwell at leisure among farmers and fruit growers.  
 By chance I became a guest of the hills and forests.

<sup>1</sup> A tributary of the Yangtze in Kiangsu.

<sup>2</sup> This feast is called *han shih*, meaning "eating cold food." It is also called *chang yen*, "forbidden fire." It comes before our Easter and two days before the Ch'ing Ming Festival, which starts about April 5 and ends about April 20. The custom of extinguishing all fires for a few days at this time of the year is mentioned in the *Chou Li*. It was forbidden by imperial edict in A.D. 474; but the edict could not be enforced. The custom is not faithfully observed to-day.

The habit of putting out fires at the time of the spring equinox is found among all worshippers of the sun.

<sup>3</sup> Difficult to translate. A quotation from the *Tso Chuan* referring to the non-recognition of talent.

In the morning the plough turns over the dewy sod,  
In the evening (the splash) of boat-poles echoes among the  
boulders of the stream.

I come and go without meeting a human being ;  
My songs rise to the blue skies of Ch'u.

*To a Friend*<sup>1</sup>

by CHANG PI

PARTED, but still full of longing, in my dreams I visit the home  
of Hsieh

And move along the little verandah and the zigzag bulustrades.  
(Awaking from dream) still full of emotion I look out on my  
own courtyard illumined by the moon

That yet shines for both of us on springtime's fallen flowers.

<sup>1</sup> Lit. "sent to someone." It is suggested by Chinese commentators that this poem was really addressed to a woman, perhaps a much-loved courtesan.

## VII

### AT WAR

#### *Lines on an Old Theme*<sup>1</sup>

by LI CH'I

IN manhood always on service abroad,  
In youth a young fire-eater of the suburbs of Peking,<sup>2</sup>  
Careless of life I threw myself before horses' hooves.  
From the first I lightly valued my seven-foot grave.  
In battle there is none who dares strive with me ;  
My beard stands out like porcupine quills.  
Yellow clouds (of dust) rise below the Lung pass,  
Above white clouds drift by.<sup>3</sup>  
(There is) no going home till duty is honourably discharged.  
In Eastern Liao<sup>4</sup> there is a girl of fifteen,  
Clever with the lute and the guitar,  
Talented either to dance or sing.  
To-day she sings on her Mongol flute a song of the stockades  
And it fills every soldier's eye with homesick tears.

<sup>1</sup> See Fletcher, *Gems of Chinese Verse*, pp. 171, 172.

<sup>2</sup> Lit. "a hero from Yu and Yen," two departments, near Peking.

<sup>3</sup> Difficult. Seems to be still referring to his gallant youth in the village. ? "Yellow cloud field" = "fields of corn" and ? "White cloud flies" = "riding like the wind."

<sup>4</sup> Fêng-tien, Manchuria.



*On spending a Night in Camp*<sup>1</sup>

by TU FU

IN the clear autumn the tent (is pitched) by the wall where  
the Wu Tung tree (stands) cold in the frost.

Alone I dwell in the city by the river, while the wax candles  
waste away.

Throughout the long night the horns voice their miseries to  
the heavens,<sup>2</sup>

In the middle heaven hangs the moon, but who looks at its  
loveliness<sup>3</sup>?

Wind and dirt<sup>4</sup> whirling round cut off all communications.

Already I have endured ten hazardous years in military service.

Forced to continue, let me use this nest

As if it were a resting-place for a bird of passage.<sup>5</sup>

*At Evening Time at O Chou*<sup>6</sup>

by LU LUN

THROUGH a drift on the clouds I can see Hanyang<sup>7</sup> city,  
Though it is still one day's journey for my lonely sail.

<sup>1</sup> Every word of the poem is supposed to express misery and regret, says the Chinese commentary.

<sup>2</sup> This is to show he is on active service, but probably as a clerk in the secretariat. The Tartar horn was only used on active service. It is always referred to in poetry as a sound that betokens misery.

<sup>3</sup> The moon is used here to suggest the peace that surrounds his family life. It suggests the idea of the moon shining on his family at home.

<sup>4</sup> The unsettled state of the country.

<sup>5</sup> Or "Forced to fly from the nest, here I can rest for a moment on one small branch in peace."

<sup>6</sup> The writer is at Wu Chung on the south side of the Yangtze where it is very wide.

<sup>7</sup> Hupeh.

The merchants sleep by day, knowing that it will be calm,  
The boatmen at evening chatter as they feel the tides.<sup>1</sup>  
In autumn where the three Hsiang<sup>2</sup> meet I think on my white  
hairs.

My heart, homesick for my home a thousand miles away,  
looks up to the bright moon.

My old property is already swallowed up by the wars,  
Yet still I hear on the river marches the grumble of the drum  
and the gong.<sup>3</sup>

### *The Old General's Song*

by WANG WEI (*written to music*)

WHEN he was fifteen or twenty years old  
He went on foot to snatch a Tartar's horse and rode it away,  
And in the mountains he had killed with an arrow a tiger with  
a white forehead.

Fairly numerous at Yen were the yellow-whiskered gentlemen  
he slew.<sup>4</sup>

Single-handed he could turn the battle for 3,000 miles ;  
With his own sword alone he could oppose a million men.  
His Chinese troops were impetuous and swift as thunder and  
lightning ;

The dashing and prancing Tartar horsemen fear the iron in  
their pitfalls.

<sup>1</sup> Another reading "of the distant tides."

<sup>2</sup> Hunan.

<sup>3</sup> The character used here is *p'u*, a drum used on horseback.

<sup>4</sup> The original "yellow-whiskered gentleman of Yeh Hsia" was Ts'ao Chang, son of Ts'ao Ts'ao, a young fire-eater of the Three Kingdoms. Here used as a foil to the subject of the song whose hero is supposed to be even more formidable.

Wêi Ch'ing<sup>1</sup> was never beaten ; that was his good fortune :  
Li Kuang<sup>1</sup> had no success ; that was his misfortune.

Since our hero retired from office he has become an old  
man,

He has lost his grip on worldly matters and he is now  
white-headed.

Of old times his flying arrow never missed both eyes.<sup>2</sup>

To-day his left elbow is as knotted as the weeping willow ;

Now at the roadside he sells ripe marquis melons.

He has learnt how to plant his five willows<sup>3</sup> ;

Ancient trees link the dense green foliage along the obscure  
lane in which he lives.

Bleak winter hills lie opposite his empty window,

But if he prayed, at his prayer the waters of Su Lê<sup>4</sup> would  
gush forth

Not like the man of Yung Chüan<sup>5</sup> who let himself go in his  
cups.

Beneath the Ho Lan Mountain the war clouds are lowering ;

Day and night feather despatches are swiftly exchanged.

The Commissioners of the Three River Provinces enlist the  
young men.

<sup>1</sup> Two generals of the Han dynasty. One was successful but not  
able ; the other able but unsuccessful.

<sup>2</sup> This is difficult. One commentary takes this passage to mean he  
was completely regardless of flying arrows.

<sup>3</sup> i.e. He has learnt as Tao Yüan-Ming (called the five willows) to  
live simply as a hermit among streams and hills.

<sup>4</sup> A reference to a General Kên Kung of the Han dynasty who,  
when he was besieged by Tartars in the city of Su Lê, prayed for  
water lest his men should die of thirst, and a spring suddenly appeared.

<sup>5</sup> A General of the Han dynasty, Kuan Fu, who used to get very  
truculent when drunk.

Five times is the Imperial order sent to call the old general  
(from his retirement) <sup>1</sup> :

He rubs and brushes his armour till it shines like snow ;  
Clutching his precious sword he brandishes it like a flashing  
star.

He would he had the bows of Yen to shoot the barbarian  
general.

Ashamed to allow the clash of armies to come to the ears of  
the Emperor,

Do not look down on him as one time prefect in Yüan  
Ching,<sup>2</sup>

For he is still able to fight one more battle to keep his laurels  
green.

### *The Marching Song of Yen*

by KAO SHIH (*written to music*)

(In the 26th year of K'ai Yüan,<sup>3</sup> a man following the army  
and returning from the border country showed me the Yen  
marching song and his account of the battles so worked on my  
feelings that I arranged this echo.)

In the days of Han the Chinese go to the north-east amid  
smoke and dust,

The Han generals take leave of their families to break the foul  
robbers.

Young manhood has a natural spirit of adventure.

The Emperor sends them with his especial blessing.

<sup>1</sup> Or the "Imperial order is sent to the General to go forth (with  
an army) by five roads." This interpretation does not seem so good.

<sup>2</sup> Ta Tung Fu.

<sup>3</sup> 739.

They bang the metal and beat the drums as they go down to  
the Elm Tree pass.  
Through the defiles of Chieh Shih <sup>1</sup> wind the lines of waving  
flags,  
The wardens of the frontier speed their feathered despatches  
over Han Hai,<sup>1</sup>  
While the hunting fires of the Tartar chieftains glare on the  
Lang <sup>1</sup> range.  
Hill and stream stretch away distant and bleak to the farthest  
horizon.  
The cavalry of the barbarians come in an invading rush like  
wind and rain.  
Only half our men survive the battle,  
Yet in the tents the female camp followers still cheer the  
survivors with song and dance.  
In the great desert at the end of autumn the grass withers on  
the frontier posts.  
On the lonely city wall at the close of day the warriors are  
few,  
But bodies that have received the Imperial blessing make light  
of the enemy,  
Yet their strength is exhausted in the border forays and the  
siege is not yet raised.  
(They have been) day in day out in their armour ; for this  
distant campaign speaks bitter toil and their labours are  
long.  
Their tears fall in sympathy with the wailing of those they  
have left behind,  
The hearts of the young wives south of the wall are filled with  
misgiving ;

<sup>1</sup> Manchuria.

Their warriors on the northern borders look back towards  
home in vain.

The wind from the border blows ceaselessly ; how can they  
cross it ?

In the uttermost limits of the borderlands are vast misty  
distances. What more is there ?

Morning, noon and night in this land of death the clouds of  
battle rise,

Throughout the chilly night the gongs sound and dippers  
boom.<sup>1</sup>

Each sees the other's naked blades bespattered with blood.  
These men have looked death in the face not troubled to  
think of fame.

Do you not see the sandy wastes and the battles and bitterness  
of the struggle.

To this day you remember the great General Li.<sup>2</sup>

*The Song of the War Chariots*<sup>3</sup>

by TU FU

CHARIOTS rumble, horses neigh,  
Infantry march with bows and arrows at their waists,  
Fathers and mothers, wives and children run out to say  
farewell,

Till dust hides the Hsien Yang<sup>4</sup> bridge.

We clutch at their clothes and run with them and get in the  
way crying ;

<sup>1</sup> Throughout the night, watches were beaten on kettles.

<sup>2</sup> Li Mu of the Chao State in the Chou dynasty who had destroyed the Tartar states and removed any fear of invasion.

<sup>3</sup> See Fletcher, *Gems of Chinese Verse*, pp. 67-70.

<sup>4</sup> Near Ch'ang-an.

The sound of our weeping mounts up to the clouds.  
 The passers-by ask them where they are going.  
 All they can answer is they are conscripts and it is urgent.<sup>1</sup>  
 Boys who at the age of fifteen were sent north to guard the  
     river,  
 When they reach forty are still in the Army of Occupation.  
 When they went away the local headman bound their heads,<sup>2</sup>  
 When they come home their hair is white,  
 Yet they have still to guard the frontiers,  
 Those frontier forts where enough blood flows to make an  
     ocean,  
 And still the Emperor Ming Wang continues to extend his  
     frontier.  
 Have you not heard that among the families of Han in the  
     Eastern Hills  
 Two hundred cities, a thousand villages, and ten thousand  
     hamlets  
 Are going back to thorns and wild willows?  
 Although there be strong women to hold the hoe and the  
     plough,  
 The grain grows wildly obscuring the boundary paths;  
 How much more must the Ch'in soldiers face in the bitterness  
     of battle?  
 They are driven forth as if they were their own dogs and  
     fowls<sup>3</sup>;

<sup>1</sup> One commentary takes this to mean that the register of names had been muddled so that many men had served much longer than they ought to have done.

<sup>2</sup> A badge of enrolment.

<sup>3</sup> Seems to mean the men of Ch'in are so hardy and able to endure the hardships of war that they are made special use of in the campaign and handed about like domestic animals.

Although people of position may question them, how do  
 soldiers dare admit a grievance?  
 Moreover, although it is already winter there is no end to  
 campaigning on the west of the frontier passes,  
 Yet District Magistrates urgently demand taxes.  
 Where can the taxes come from?  
 It has come to this, that to give birth to sons is ruinous,  
 And it is actually better to produce girls.  
 Girls can always be married to neighbours;  
 Sons are only fit to perish like the prairie grass.  
 Ah! see you not at the head of the Kokonor  
 How the white bones of the long dead lie unburied?  
 New ghosts complain bitterly, old ghosts moan,  
 The heavens are darkened, the rain falls  
 As the ghosts from the past whisper to those that have but  
 lately died.

*The Moon in the Mountain Pass*<sup>1</sup>

by LI PO

THE bright moon comes out from behind the Peak of Heaven<sup>2</sup>  
 Floating in vast seas of cloud;  
 A distant wind from a myriad miles away  
 Blows over the jade door pass.  
 The sons of Han march along the Po-têng<sup>3</sup> road,  
 The Tartars peer into the bays of the Kokonor.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Fletcher, *More Gems of Chinese Poetry*, pp. 14 and 15. Obata, *Works of Li Po*, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> The Altai Mountains.

<sup>3</sup> Manchuria.

<sup>4</sup> The Palmirs.



From of old this was a battle ground  
From which none ever came back.  
The gaze of the soldiers ranges to the distant horizon ;  
Many woebegone faces think of the homes they have left  
behind.  
This very night (their women <sup>1</sup>) watching from upper  
chambers  
Sorrow and sigh, and find no rest.

*A Spring Prospect* <sup>2</sup>

by TU FU

THE capital is in ruins,<sup>3</sup> all that is left are the hills and rivers ;  
In spring its streets lie deep in grass and trees ;  
In sorrow for the times the very flowers are weeping  
And the birds flutter in grief at the sad farewell.  
The smoke of beacons has burnt for three months on end.  
Letters from home are worth ten thousand pieces of gold.  
I scratch the scanty hairs on my white head ;  
Vaguely I struggle and without success to secure them with  
a pin.

<sup>1</sup> Another interpretation makes these last two lines refer to the soldiers on guard duty gazing at the moon from the watch-tower and thinking of their homes.

<sup>2</sup> Fletcher, *More Gems*, p. 97.

<sup>3</sup> After the rebellion of An Lu-shan.

*A Trooper's Sad Thoughts*

by LIU CHUNG-YUNG

YEAR by year if it is not Golden River <sup>1</sup> it is the Jade Door  
Pass <sup>2</sup> ;

Morning after morning we take up our whips and gird on our  
sword rings.

Through the white snow of three springs we have buried our  
comrades in "green tombs" <sup>3</sup> of exile

Where for ten thousand *li* the Yellow River winds its way  
through the black hills.

*The Song of the Frontier Post*

by WANG CH'ANG-LING

THE cicadas call in the mulberry trees where the leaves are few  
In the eighth month on the Hsiao <sup>4</sup> Frontier passes.

From the barrier we pass on to another.

Everywhere withered grasses meet the eye.

From of old the strangers from Yu <sup>5</sup> and Ping <sup>6</sup> passed this  
way ;

Now they all lie intermingled with the dusty plain.

Don't you too hunger to be a soldier of fortune

Or boast of your roan horse with its jet black mane ?

<sup>1</sup> Shansi.

<sup>2</sup> Shensi. The river and the pass are near the frontier.

<sup>3</sup> An allusion to the grave of Wang Chiu Chüan.

<sup>4</sup> Hsia Kwan in Kansu.

<sup>5</sup> Chihli.

<sup>6</sup> Shansi.

*A Song in the manner of the Poem<sup>1</sup> of Liang Chou<sup>2</sup>*

by WANG HAN

BEAUTIFUL wine<sup>3</sup> from the grapes of Liang Chou in cups that  
glow in the night<sup>4</sup>;

We wish to drink but the *P'i p'a* summons us to horseback,<sup>5</sup>  
Drunk we will lie down on the sands; don't jeer at us;  
It is the old story, of those who went out to fight, how many  
ever come back?

<sup>1</sup> The original was by Kuo Chih-yün.

<sup>2</sup> Kansu, the far west of the Empire.

<sup>3</sup> Chinese wine is spirits. As wine is more poetical than spirits, it  
is sad Chinese did not use it.

<sup>4</sup> i.e. of white jade.

<sup>5</sup> The *p'i p'a* was struck on horseback, and was a signal to the  
drinkers to be quick and finish their drinks.

## VIII

### THE HERMIT'S LIFE

*In the Evening returning Home to Lu Mên,<sup>1</sup> my Mountain Home*

*by MÊNG HAO-JAN*

FROM the hill monastery the bell sounds,  
Daylight gives place to dusk ;  
At the Yu Liang <sup>1</sup> ferry head men wrangle and chatter as they  
clamber aboard  
And others follow the sandy shore to the river villages.  
I also am on board the boat and return home to Lu Mên.  
On Lu Mên the moon shines brightly, pushing its way  
through the forest mists.  
Suddenly I come to old Mr. P'ang's hermitage,  
Rocks by his doorway and the path is fringed with pines.  
This is where tranquillity and peace hold sway,  
Only the hermit-philosopher comes and goes.

<sup>1</sup> Near Hsiang-yang in Hupeh.

*On searching for Lu Hung-chien and not meeting Him*

by THE PRIEST CHIAO-JAN

You have removed your house although it is not far from the  
city wall.

A wild path runs to it through mulberry orchards and fields  
of hemp ;

The chrysanthemums which you planted recently by the  
wattle hedge are growing,

But although autumn has come they are not yet in flower.<sup>1</sup>

I tap at the door, but no howling dog greets me ;

I ask the neighbour on your western side,

They inform me you have taken the road to the hills

And that you only return each day at sunset. <sup>2</sup>

*With Kao Shih and Hsieh Ch'u climbing the Pagoda of the  
Monastery of Benevolent Kindness*

by TSÊN TS'AN

THE pagoda shoots forth like a living thing,  
Standing alone it rears its head to the palaces of heaven,  
Climbing it one leaves the whole world behind.

The steps coil upwards until they end in emptiness.

Its striking height overawes the heavens,<sup>3</sup>

Dominating the surrounding country like the work of no  
human hand.

<sup>1</sup> Probably the friend lived at the top of a hill, for while the town chrysanthemums are in bloom his have not yet begun to flower, or simply another sign of the newness of his dwelling.

<sup>2</sup> The suggestion is that the subject of the poem is an "outside place man," i.e. one who untrammelled now yearns for lonely contemplation among the hills.

<sup>3</sup> Lit. "The land of the gods."

The four corners of the roof hide the white sun ;  
 Its seven stories stroke the azure sky.  
 I peer below to mark the mounting birds,  
 Leaning over I listen to the whistling wind.  
 Beneath me the hills, range upon range, flow away like  
     surging billows ;  
 They run together as it were in homage to the east.  
 Below green locust trees line the highway,  
 How gracefully do the country mansions echo to the tinkling  
     of their ornaments.<sup>1</sup>  
 Colours of autumn come out of the west  
 And fill the passes with their glory.  
 The five imperial tombs above the northern plain  
 Are dim green specks among immemorial hills.  
 I become conscious of the philosophy of repose ;  
 I have always believed in benevolent fate.  
 Here I will hang up my official cap and leave (the world)  
 And in the way of enlightenment find endless contentment.

*On Saying Farewell to Ling Chê (a Monk)*

by LIU CHANG-CH'ING

GREEN, green is the monastery in the Bamboo Groves,  
 Dim, dim the bell sounds at evening.  
 The slanting rays of the sun strike the bamboo hat slung on  
     your shoulders  
 As you go back alone to your home among the hills.

<sup>1</sup> More probably this refers to the elegant carving of the official doorways. Especially as it has been indicated in an earlier line that the writer could hear nothing but the wind.

*On sending a Letter to the Taoist Hermit of the Chüan  
Chiao Hill*

by WEI YING WU

It is morning as I sit shivering in my studio.  
Suddenly I thought of the hermit of the hills.  
(I pictured) you binding faggots deep in the ravines by some  
mountain stream,  
Then returning home to cook on your stone hearth.  
(I thought) I should like to take you a calabash of wine  
To cheer you from a distance on this windy damp evening,  
But the fallen leaves would have covered the hill sides.  
How could I have found my way?

*On Hunting for the Hermit and not finding Him*

by CHIA TAO

UNDER the pines I ask the boy ;  
He says his master has gone gathering herbs  
And that he can only (tell you that) he is somewhere on the  
hills.  
The mists are thick and he would not know where to find  
him.

*On seeking the Western Hill Hermit without finding him*

by CH'IU WEI

ON the extreme summit is one thatched hut ;  
The road winds upwards three thousand miles ;  
I knock at the door, but no servant boy answers.  
Peeping in I see but a wooden table and bench ;  
Either you are out riding in your sedan chair

Or you are fishing the autumn waters.  
Like swallows that turn and twist we pass but do not meet.  
With firm intent I stand gazing into space.  
The grass is vivid under new fallen rain,  
By your window at evening the wind sighs in the pines.  
(As I stand there) I am filled with peace and tranquillity.  
Sight and sound quicken the eye and ear,  
Although there is no guest and no host,  
I have caught the meaning of your philosophy.  
When the ecstasy has passed I descend the hill.  
Why should I wait your arrival?

*A Visit to Ch'ang, the Taoist recluse of Nan Ch'i*<sup>1</sup>  
by LIU CHANG-CH'ING

ALL my way along the road (to your cottage)  
On the mosses I see the footprints of your wooden shoes.  
White clouds lie low upon your quiet island,  
Sweet grasses grow right up to your idle door.  
A passing shower brings out the colour of the pines.  
Following the hills I come to the source of the stream.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lit. "Southern Ravine." *More Gems*, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> Stream, flowers, meditation are one and have no need for speech.



## IX

### MYTHS AND FAIRIES

#### *The Peach Garden*<sup>1</sup>

(From the legend of Tao Yüan Ming 376-396, third century B.C.  
Written to music)

by WANG WEI

THE fisherman's boat is carried away along the water hugging  
the spring hills ;  
By two banks the peach blossom marks the limits of an ancient  
ferry ;  
The fisherman sits gazing at the pink blossoms regardless of  
the distance,  
Drifting to the end of a green mountain stream, careless of  
where he goes.  
A narrow passage in the mountains leads by secret detours to  
the beginning of an open bay,  
There the hills open out on a vast expanse of flat land :  
He sees afar off a place where the trees are massed together ;  
He approaches it and it is a village of 1000 homes scattered  
amid flowers and bamboo.

<sup>1</sup> Giles translates the title "Peach blossom fountains." See Giles *Chinese Literature*, pp. 130, 131. See also for the same story P'ai Ti's farewell to Ts'ui. The Peach Blossom River was supposed to flow to Tao Yüan, a peach garden which is the land of immortality.

The stranger begins to distinguish the speech of the Han dynasty.  
Those who dwelt there had not changed the fashion of their clothes since the days of Chin.<sup>1</sup>  
These village dwellers lived together at the source of the Wu Ling River ;  
They had fled away from the world to live the lives of peasants.  
The moon is bright underneath the pines,  
Shining on their quiet windows ;  
The sun rises ; dogs bark and chickens crow.  
The inhabitants are startled to hear a man has come from the world of men,  
And vie with each other in hospitality.  
They compete to invite him into their houses and ask him whence he has come.  
When morning comes they sweep away the fallen flowers and open the village gates.  
When night falls fishermen and woodcutters come home by way of the stream.  
Once upon a time these people, seeking a place of refuge, left their fellow men.  
They sought to obtain immortality and they did not go back.  
In among the ravines and gorges what could they know of the affairs of the world ?  
All they could see of the world were distant clouds and hills  
Their visitor did not suspect this was a holy place, unknown to mortal men ;  
His earthly heart had not extinguished earthly desires and he thought of his native home.

<sup>1</sup> 255-249 B.C.

Once out of the cave he does not mind that he is separated  
from it by hills and water.

(When once again) he leaves his family to go on the same  
long journey,

He says to himself, I have been there before, I cannot miss the  
way.

How should he know that the mountains and ravines had all  
changed ?

He can only remember that on the former occasion he  
plunged deep into the green hills

Where mountain rivulets meandered to and fro, leading him  
to misty woods.

(Again) the spring is here and everywhere peach flowers stain  
the water,

But he cannot trace the way to the land of immortality.  
Where shall he hunt for it now ?

### *Ch'ang O*<sup>1</sup>

by LI SHANG-YIN

THE shadows of the candles fall deep on the screens of  
mother-of-pearl ;

The Milky Way sinks and the stars fade towards the morning.

<sup>1</sup> The Chinese Goddess of the Moon, wife of an archer who lived according to tradition in the twenty-fifth century B.C. She stole the elixir of life from her husband and fled to the moon, where she became a three-legged toad. Chinese commentaries suggest that this poem is an allusion to the life of a palace girl who, like Ch'ang O, obtained a fabulous gift, not that of the immortal drug but of entry to the palace. The writer asks if she regrets she cannot get back to life as an ordinary mortal.

Do you repent as you should, Ch'ang O, for stealing the drug  
of immortality  
As you look down night after night on the green seas and blue  
skies ?

*The Inlaid<sup>1</sup> Lute<sup>2</sup>*

by LI SHANG-YIN

THE brocade-embroidered lute had fifty strings,<sup>3</sup> no one  
knows why ;  
Each string and each support made one think of the years of  
one's prime.  
Chuang Tzŭ dreamt at morning he was a butterfly.<sup>4</sup>  
After death, the soul of the Emperor Wang took up its brief  
springtime abode in the body of a nightjar,<sup>5</sup>  
While in the wide ocean under the bright moon the  
mermaids<sup>6</sup> drop their tears which become pearls.

<sup>1</sup> i.e. the lute "adorned with tracery like embroidery," not as one might think the lute from the brocade bag.

<sup>2</sup> This poem is a piece of surrealism—fantastic ideas are strung together indiscriminately. See *More Gems*, pp. 143, 144.

<sup>3</sup> A fabulous lute used by an Emperor of the Han. It had fifty strings, each string an emblem of a year of his life.

<sup>4</sup> Chuang Tzŭ, who could not distinguish between reality and dream. Was he a butterfly dreaming he was a man or a man dreaming he was a butterfly ?

<sup>5</sup> An old king of Szechwan, whose name was Tu, who when he died was supposed to have been reincarnated in the form of a nightjar.

<sup>6</sup> Possibly a kind of shark which was supposed to weep out its eyes which became pearls.

Why at Lan T'ien <sup>1</sup> in the warm sunshine does jade engender  
mists?

Can we hope for these kinds of portents to come again?  
Or are they only things that had form once but have vanished  
away?

<sup>1</sup> Lan T'ien, famous for its jade which had magical properties.

## X

### THE LEGENDARY PAST

#### *The Palace of the Sui Dynasty*<sup>1</sup>

by LI SHANG-YIN

THE rooms of your purple spring palace are enveloped in  
the mists (of the past) and have melted away ;  
You wished to take Wu Chêng<sup>2</sup> and make it an imperial  
abode,  
But the jade seal was not yours by rightful affinity and went  
to T'ai Tsung.<sup>3</sup>  
Your embroidered sails<sup>4</sup> might have reached to the utter-  
most regions of the world.

<sup>1</sup> This poem refers to Yang-ti, the only competent emperor of the short-lived Sui dynasty that preceded the T'ang. He was renowned for his love of luxury and dissipation. See *More Gems*, pp. 147, 148.

<sup>2</sup> Wu Hu on the Yangtze ; lit. the "weed-grown city."

<sup>3</sup> Lit. the "horn of the sun," i.e. T'ai Tsung, the second emperor of the T'ang which overthrew the Sui. When he was four it is said a peculiar bone, shaped like the sun, was dug up in his courtyard, which was taken to be a symbol of his imperial mission, and a necromancer told him he had the carriage of the dragon and the phoenix and the appearance of the sun in heaven, i.e. he had to become emperor by virtue of his heavenly mission.

<sup>4</sup> Yang-ti was famous for the size of his war junks and the extravagance of their furnishings ; they were supposed to have had sails of silk whose perfume carried for miles.

But now even the fireflies<sup>1</sup> have deserted the decayed  
grasses (that cover your palace)  
And to the last of your ancient willows<sup>2</sup> only one crow  
comes home to roost.  
If in the grave you meet the last emperor of the Chên  
You will scarcely care to ask him to sing you "the flowers  
in the inner garden."<sup>3</sup>

*Song of Old and Cherished Memory*

No. 4

by TU FU

THE Lord of Szechwan,<sup>4</sup> when he led an expedition against  
Wu, visited the three gorges.  
In the year of his death he was living here in the palace of  
"Endless Peace."  
One can imagine his kingfisher-blue banners winding through  
the lonely hills ;  
His jade palace has come to nothing and the site is now  
a tumbledown monastery.

<sup>1</sup> A reference to an evening party given by Yang-ti, who had several piculs of fireflies gathered by imperial orders and released for the occasion.

<sup>2</sup> He had a causeway built lined with willows reputed to be 3,000 *li* long.

<sup>3</sup> The last emperor of the Chên composed this song to lament the loss of his kingdom to the Sui, and a very beautiful dancing girl called Li Hua used to sing it to him. If he had lived, he must have seen the same fate overtake his conquerors at the hands of the T'ang.

<sup>4</sup> Liu Pei, the patron of Chu-Ko Liang.

Pond herons build their nests in the pine and cypress that  
surround its old courts ;  
Winter and summer at the due seasons you only see the old  
man of the villages wandering about the shrine ;<sup>1</sup>  
The sacrificial halls of Chu-Ko Liang lie for ever close to  
those of his master ;  
So in one spot they sacrifice to the prince and his loyal  
minister together.

*A Lament by the Riverside* <sup>2</sup>

by TU FU

THE old man of Hsiao Ling <sup>3</sup> swallows his groans  
As he steals on a spring day along the winding banks of the  
Chu <sup>4</sup> River,  
For along its shores ten thousand doors of the great palace  
are locked.  
For whose sake now do the budding willows and the fresh  
rushes spread their green ?  
I remember of old times the processions of rainbow banners  
descending to the southern garden  
And how in that garden myriad things blossomed in their  
bright colours.  
From the Chao Yang Tien Palace the greatest in the land  
came forth,  
Sharing the Imperial chariot or in attendance at his side.

<sup>1</sup> To observe the ceremony of sacrifice.

<sup>2</sup> See Fletcher, *Gems of Chinese Verse*, pp. 71-73.

<sup>3</sup> Hunan.

<sup>4</sup> i.e. in Ch'ang An, where the Emperor Ming Huang and Yang Kuei Fei used often to enjoy themselves.



In front of the Imperial chariot marched able warriors  
 carrying bows and arrows ;  
 White horses chafed at their golden bits.  
 When they had made their evolutions and looked up into  
 the skies, they discharged their arrows.  
 She smiled to see a pair of birds come tumbling to the  
 ground.  
 Those bright pupils and gleaming teeth, where are they  
 now ?  
 Blood and dirt and a wandering ghost that can never come  
 back.  
 The pure Wei River flows east to the Chien Ko <sup>1</sup> pass.  
 One remains, the other goes, and there is no intelligence  
 between them.<sup>2</sup>  
 Men overcome by their emotions let tears wet their breasts ;  
 The river water and flowers go on (there is no end to them) ;  
 In the twilight the dust of the Tartar horsemen <sup>3</sup> fills the  
 whole city.  
 I wish to go to the south of the city and look to the north.<sup>4</sup>

*Grieving for the Imperial Grandson*

by TU FU

ON the city walls of C'hang An there sit white-headed  
 crows.<sup>5</sup>  
 At evening they fly over the western city gate and perch  
 there calling ;

<sup>1</sup> Szechwan.

<sup>2</sup> The death of Yang Kuei Fei has separated her from the Emperor.

<sup>3</sup> The armies of the rebel An Lu-shan.

<sup>4</sup> The poet is in such a dazed condition that he has lost his bearings

<sup>5</sup> Symbols of foreboding.

Alighting on the roofs, they peck at the eaves of the great houses.

From beneath these roofs important officials rushed out to escape the Tartars.

The golden whips are broken and the nine horses are dead. Though he be of Imperial blood he could not ride fast enough to escape with the Emperor ;

At his (the Emperor's grandson) waist are precious jewels and azure coral,

Yet pity him weeping at the corner of the road ;

Ask him and he dare not tell you his name ;

Only he speaks of his distress and sorrow and begs to be taken as a servant.

Already for a hundred days he has skulked amid palms and thorns ;

On his body there is no inch of skin left unlacerated ;

The first Emperor of T'ang and his sons and grandsons have all prominent noses :

The dragon's seed naturally differs from ordinary men.

Now the wolf<sup>1</sup> is in the city and the dragon<sup>2</sup> is in the wastes.

The grandson of the Emperor must protect that body of his worth a thousand pieces of gold.

I do not dare hold long speech with him when approaching the cross roads ;

On his account I halt for a brief moment.

Last night the east wind carried the stench of blood ;

From the east came the camel artillery filling the old city.

<sup>1</sup> An Lu-shan, the rebel general.

<sup>2</sup> The Emperor Ming Huang.

In the northern regions are vigorous men strong of body  
and hand ;

Of old times what courage and strength, to-day what  
clowns.

I hear the Emperor has already abdicated,  
Yet the Emperor's prestige in the north subjugated the  
southern Khans.

(So much so that) the "Hua Mên" <sup>1</sup> gashing their faces  
ask to wash out his disgrace.

Be careful, do not speak out, there are spies around us ;  
Be cautious and careful and may the propitious influence of  
the five imperial tombs of your ancestors still watch  
over you.

*On Anchoring in the Ch'in Huai River* <sup>2</sup>

by TU MU

THE mists cover the cold waters of the river, but moonlight  
is on the sands

When I anchor at Ch'in Huai at night near the wine-shop.  
The women whom the merchants patronize <sup>3</sup> do not know  
the bitterness of a lost country,

For there still steals across the river the song of the Huai  
Ting Fa.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A mountain tribe who deliberately gashed their faces as a sign of  
their loyal determination to avenge the Emperor's disgrace.

<sup>2</sup> Near Nanking.

<sup>3</sup> i.e. prostitutes.

<sup>4</sup> A song composed before the fall of the Ch'ên dynasty (557-587).  
This song was pretty and licentious and was full of sad memories.  
Tu Mu chides the ladies of easy virtue who sing at Ch'in Huai for  
not understanding its historical implications.

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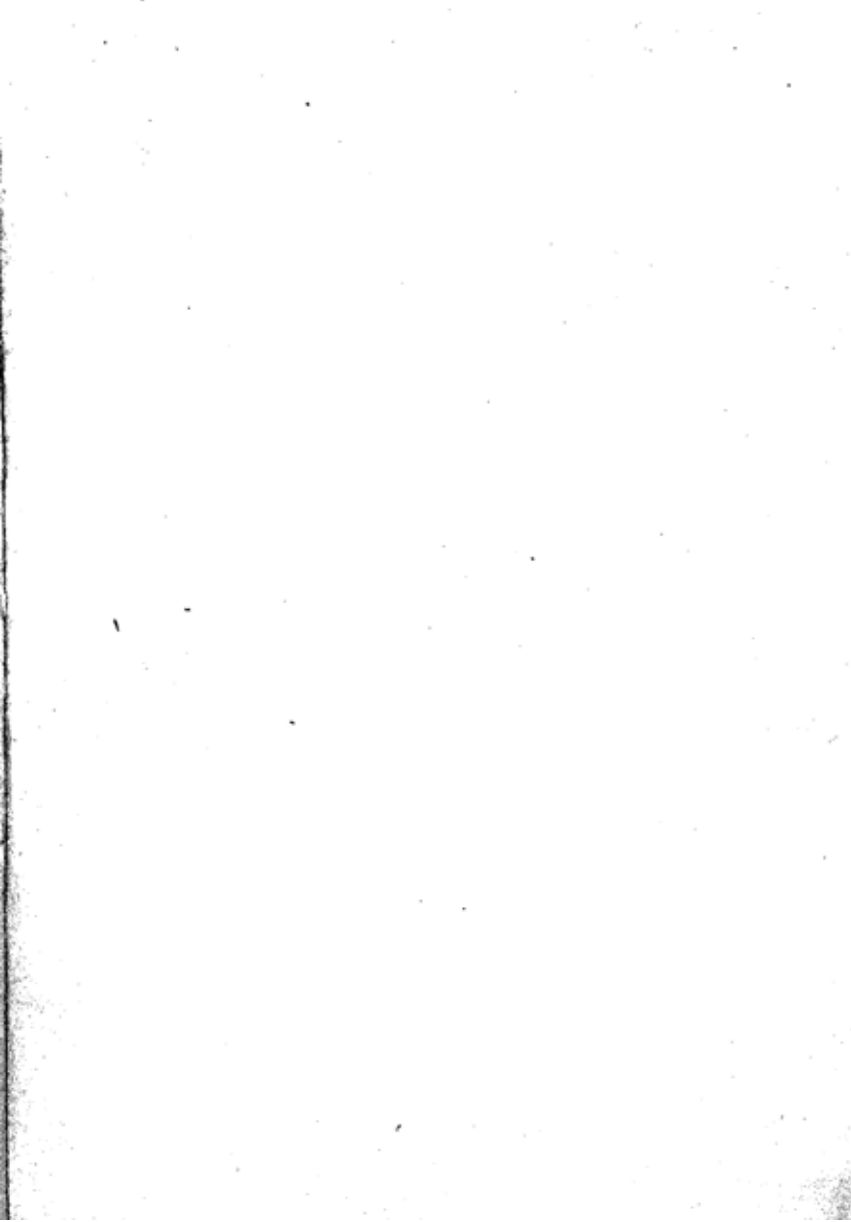
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